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The PASSING SHOW

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FIRE DOWN BELOW

a grim romance of ocean monsters

by Captain William Outerson

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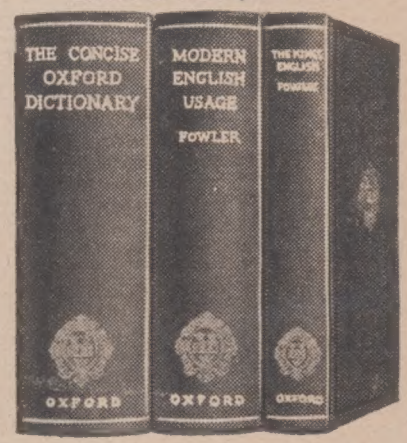

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The PASSING SHOW
No. 303. Vol. 6. JANUARY 8, 1938

FIRE DOWN BELOW

They sighted a ship heading eastward with all sail set. But there was nobody at the wheel to check her erratic course. In fact there wasn't a soul aboard. Yet all the boats were there still covered. "They haven't been gone long, sir," said a puzzled bosun, "for the fire's still fresh in the galley stove"

BY CAPTAIN WILLIAM OUTERSON

ILLUSTRATED BY EDGAR SPENCELEY

THE ship *Unicorn* loitered to the westward, running large with a gentle breeze from the south. In the light of the brilliant moon her decks gleamed whitely; aloft, sly shadows played among her sails and spars. Overside, the quiet sea murmured as she passed.

Mister Mergam stood on the weather side of the poop, staring sourly ahead and seeing, but not perceiving, the beauty of the night. His keen ears caught the various sounds of ship and sea and wind and his trained mind recognised them automatically, especially the soft thud of the rudder as the sea touched it, now on one side and now on the other. It was a simple sound, near and familiar, relentless as fate and sounding a note of caution, obscurely ominous, as if the voice of the helm attempted to warn him against any lack of vigilance.

In this particular morning watch it gave him that impression, not because he was feeling down and defeated, since he had felt that way for years, but owing to his mood of sour rebellion, which had now reached a climax. He hated the empty plains of the sea and the narrow rounds of sailing-ship duties, but had to endure them because he could not make a living ashore.

Through all his years of roving, even on nights like this, he had remained blind to the beauty of the sea and now his feeling toward it had settled into weary hatred. He knew its effects of blended colour, its wide gradations of sound and action, the tireless charm of a sailing ship's effortless movement, the quality of silent distance and the wonder of the skies. Dimly at times, in moments of rare emotion, he had caught a glimpse of the mystic hand that beckons beyond the horizon and felt for a little while the fated urge of the wanderer. But that was in the beginning, long ago when he had first gone to sea, and he had forgotten it.

The lee side of the deck, to starboard, abounded in shadows cast by the moon. Under the mainsail a dark blotch extended from the half-deck to the main hatch, and a bright space lay between that and the forward house. Observing this with his customary dull disinterest in details not requiring action, he watched the shadow thrown by the foot of the mainsail, backing and filling in the languid breeze. Raising his eyes from the deck to the sail, he suddenly stiffened and gazed unseeing in front of him as he felt an unusual movement of the hull, a strange shaking that startled him because it was outside all his former experience. The whole ship, hull and spars and rigging, trembled eerily, and all the gear aloft made a weird clatter. He had never known any ship to move like this and as he stood wondering what had caused it, the skipper came hurriedly from the companion and halted beside him.

"What was that?" he demanded nervously.

"I don't know, sir," Mister Mergam answered. "I've never felt anything like it till now, so I wouldn't know what it was."

"You don't know!" exclaimed the skipper. "You're here on deck in charge of the ship and

(*please turn over*)

Continuing

FIRE DOWN BELOW

something scrapes along her side—a derelict, more than likely—and you don't know what it was! You don't know." The skipper waved his hands helplessly. "Why don't you know? Didn't you see anything? Invisible things don't shake a ship like that. It must have been something big enough to be seen. Were you asleep?"

"No, sir, I wasn't asleep. I was wider awake than you are now, attending to my job and I saw nothing. There was nothing to be seen. The look-out didn't see anything or he would've reported it and the man at the wheel didn't see anything, either."

The mate turned away sullenly and approached the man at the wheel.

"Did you see what shook her a minute ago, Thomson?" he inquired.

"No, sir," Thomson answered. "I didn't see nothin'. I looked astern after she stopped shakin' an' there wasn't nothin' in sight."

"You heard what he said, sir," Mister Mergam remarked to the skipper, in a tone of meagre triumph. "There was nothing in sight."

"Aye, I heard him," Captain Garton returned impatiently. "What do you suppose it could have been? Possibly a submerged derelict."

"No, sir, I don't think so. It wasn't the sort of shock any kind of a derelict would give. I've been in collision with a derelict and it was something entirely different. This was strong, but soft and trembly. A derelict would grind and scrape along her side and make noise enough to wake the dead."

"I suppose you're right," the skipper admitted unwillingly. He moved away from the mate and stood with his hands on the poop rail staring at the sea ahead—a tall man, gaunt and irascible from chronic dyspepsia, due to overeating and lack of exercise; tired of life and hating everybody, including himself. His excessively bright eyes wandered fretfully along the deck on the weather side, which was lit by the moon, except for an edge of shadow here and there, and he glanced at the leech of the mainsail. Something attracted his attention then and he looked over on the port bow. A startled exclamation broke from him and he threw up his arm in swift apprehension, pointing urgently.

"Hey, Mister Mergam!" he cried. "What's that?"

The mate looked in the direction indicated by the captain's finger and noted a lifting of the skyline, an effect he had often observed while approaching a high coast from the sea, though this was not quite so well defined. He stared in silence and without understanding, disregarding the impatient questions of the skipper till he reached the conclusion that the elevation ahead was a great wave approaching the ship at high speed. In the moonlight he could see its steep unbroken slope, shining like bright metal and rushing toward them and he was disturbed by the thought that it might sweep the decks clean.

"It's a big wave, sir," he said at last.

"Yes, it is," the skipper agreed. "It couldn't be anything else. And it explains the shaking of the ship a few minutes ago. There's been an upheaval of the sea bottom, a submarine earthquake, and when the sea bottom shook, the sea shook with it. The sea floor hereabouts has risen nearly two thousand feet during the past twenty years."

"Tidal wave on the port bow, sir," the look-out reported, belatedly.

"Aye, aye," replied Mister Mergam. "Close all ports forrid."

They could see the forms of the men moving about on their bare feet as they carried out this order, scattering silently and passing among the shadows from the sails on the foremast. The ports were closed in a little while and the men thought they ought to shut all the doors, but before they had time to do this, the big wave rolled up like the side of a mountain.

Captain and mate watched it come, not expecting any particular trouble from it, whatever its size, since ships are built to ride the seas in all weathers and conditions, and the wave was approaching from a favourable direction, about two points on the weather bow. As it drew nearer and revealed its enormous size, its smooth crest towering loftily above the level of the sea, the two officers began to feel doubtful. They could hardly expect the ship to ride dry over such a mass of water as that, so abruptly sloped and moving so swiftly. When it reached the bows of the *Unicorn*, she gave a mighty heave and lifted her head in a gallant effort to climb the watery height, but she could not rise swiftly enough. Halfway up, her bowsprit and cutwater drove into it, and it broke over her, coming down on the decks with a solid crash that seemed to beat her under the sea. It swept over the forecastle head and rolled along the main deck in an avalanche, burying the houses far under and foaming against the masts as high as the foot of the courses. Rolling over the poop a fathom deep, it submerged the skipper, the mate and the man at the wheel. They held on grimly and in a few seconds the wave passed on.

As the water sluiced off the decks into the calm sea and all became normal again, save that the galley fire was blacked out, the morning coffee was ruined and all the pots and pans were adrift in eighteen inches of salt water. Both forecastles were flooded, because the watch on deck, having been given barely enough time to close the ports, had not been able to shut the doors and the watch below came spluttering out, cursing the other blokes for not having sense enough to do such things without waiting for orders.

In the galley the cook cursed tidal waves and everything else as he gathered up his pots and pans and relit the fire in the stove, after cleaning out the mess of sodden coals. It was now half-past four, the morning coffee—the most welcome event of the day to seafaring men—was due at two bells, therefore he must hurry. He would have a fresh brew ready in time if it could be done

In the port forecastle the men of the watch were changing into dry dungarees and discussing, after their fashion, the events of the morning.

"That was a big sea," said one.

"Aye, it was, but I've seen bigger off the Horn," old Charlie declared.

"You never seen a bigger one anywheres, Charlie. You must of dreamt it."

"This old hooker is full of bad luck."

"So she is. She ain't had a lucky day since we left port."

"When d'yuh think the coffee will be ready?"

"Ask the cook. Mebbe he knows."

"I give Snooky in the sta'bo'd watch a coupla black eyes."

"Take a squint at yer own."

"The skipper's crazy."

"Naw, he ain't crazy. He's sick. He oughta stay ashore."

"Say——! Did yuh feel that? What the hell was that?"

On the quiet poop, Mister Mergam stood with feet

Suddenly the men of the watch saw the air above the rail alive with tentacles. They swayed uncertainly for a second or two, then lashed out with sure aim

apart, glancing listlessly at the skyline from time to time, casting his eyes aloft at the towering sails, surveying the deck and watching the play of shadows born of the moon. The colour of the sea had changed, and it no longer gleamed with the purple blue sheen of deep water. As they were not within several hundred miles of the Grand Bank, he surmised that the disturbance on the sea bottom had sent up clouds of ooze that imparted a dull hue to the water. While considering this, turning it over in his mind with slow interest, he felt the ship quiver again to a sudden shock, altogether different from the first. It felt as if a floating body, soft and enormously heavy, had come to rest against the bottom of the ship, and he went swiftly to the rail to peer intently over the side. At the same time he noticed the men of the watch running silently to the main rail forward, where they also stared down at the sea. Evidently they had felt the shock. He had just completed his casual observance of them when the skipper again erupted on the poop, very much annoyed.

"What was that, Mister Mergam?" he demanded in his usual exasperated tone.

"That was no earthquake shock. Something hit her that time—you can't deny it. Something actual and material struck against her bottom."

"Yes, sir. I'm not denying it. Something certainly hit her then and I'm looking to see what it was, but there's nothing in sight."

"Nothing in sight," the skipper repeated. "Nothing in sight. What in the name of all the mysteries is happening to this ship, anyhow? All sorts of things going on, and nobody knows anything about it!"

Suddenly there came another soft, heavy shock, followed by others at short intervals.

"My God!" the skipper whispered, staring fearfully down at the muddy sea. "More and more of the things, a whole crowd of them, monsters of some horrible sort, clamped along her keel, driven up from the bottom of the sea by the disturbance down there! What are they? Can you tell me that, Mister Mergam?"

"No, sir, I can't," the mate replied, uneasily.

They stared at each other in the light of the sinking moon, two perturbed and bewildered men suspecting some lurking danger.

"The wheel's jammed, sir," the man at the wheel reported. "I can't move it."

The skipper and the mate turned and stared at the man, watching his strenuous but unavailing efforts to move the wheel.

"She's lost headway, sir," said Mister Mergam, looking over the side again. "She's standing still."

"You're quite right," the captain agreed, in a different tone of voice, low and troubled. "These big brutes clinging to her bottom have stopped her, and one of them has clamped itself across the rudder. Whatever they are down there, they're keeping out of sight. Ah! There's another. That one struck forrid under the bows. There must be a lot of them."

The man at the wheel, peering at the timepiece in the binnacle, saw that it was five o'clock and made two bells. Forward on the forecastle head the man on look-out struck the ship's bell twice, two measured strokes that boomed and lingered about the shadowy decks. Placid now, and smoking a short clay pipe as black as ebony, the cook, who had flaming red hair and hailed from Glasgow, thrust his head through the galley doorway and asked what the hell was wrong now. The men strung along the rail told him they didn't know what was wrong, but if he would hurry with the coffee they would tell him as soon as they found out.

"If there's anither tidal wave comin', gie us a shout, so's I can close the doorrs and the porrts," the cook requested.

"How about coffee?" they inquired, turning to observe him with the bantering regard that sailors bestow on sea cooks.

"It'll be ready in aboot ten meenits," he promised them.

In a little less time than that he beat with a ladle on the bottom of an empty pan, making a racket that might have been heard or felt by the beasts along the keel, and the men left the rail to fetch their hook-pots from the forecastle. They were puzzled and a trifle scared and had little to say to each other, though they had chattered enough when those queer shocks had been felt. Some of them thought that whales had rubbed their backs against the hull, but others argued that this would not have stopped the ship's headway. There must be a lot of big, soft beasts hanging on to her, scared up from the depths by the earthquake down there that had caused the tidal wave, or the ship wouldn't be standing still the way she was. In silence they went one by one to the galley door and waited in line for their pots of coffee. Old Charlie was first. He stood at the door, holding his hook-pot inside, to be filled with a ladleful of the stuff the owners called coffee, dipped from a boiler on the stove.

The skipper and the mate still waited at the taffrail for a sight of the things from the deep and the long inaction had begun to affect their nerves.

"If we could only see them and find out what they are," muttered the captain, "we might be able to decide on some plan of action. But how can we fight against invisible things of unknown nature?" He paced back and forth along a short path between the taffrail and the standard binnacle, frowning impatiently, clenching and opening his hands nervously.

Mister Mergam had glanced forward at the sound of the cook's gong and he watched the men as they came out of the forecastle and went to the galley door to await their turn for coffee. The first man in line received his whack and started for the fore hatch, where he intended to sit while drinking it and he did not see the long, slender tentacle that quirted over the rail above his head and waved here and there seeking what it might find. It found old Charlie as he reached the hatch, concealed from his watchmates by the corner of the forward house, wrapped itself round his neck with a strangling hold which prevented him from uttering a sound and dragged him violently over the rail. The next man, following with his coffee, saw Charlie at the rail, striking madly at the tentacle with his hook-pot and a startled yell attracted the attention of the others. They spun round and saw old Charlie going over the side in a headlong dive with his waving hook-pot, but were too late to notice the deadly tentacle round his neck. They rushed to the rail and stared down at the dull water, but the man who had seen the tentacle held back. He knew the sort of beast it belonged to.

Suddenly the men of the watch saw the air above the rail alive with tentacles. They swayed uncertainly for a second or two in order to feel the position of their prey, then lashed out with sure aim at the horrified men. Whipping round them, they tightened their hold to a vice-like grip that no human strength could break, though a sharp knife could slice them in two if properly used. The men were panic-stricken and struck wildly with sheath-knives and hook-pots, but failed, in their excitement, to out themselves adrift and went over the rail screaming. The boatswain, carpenter and sail-maker jumped up from the main hatch and rushed across the deck to rescue the few survivors of the watch, but half a dozen tentacles seized them and jerked them over the side, striking futile blows.

When the first tentacle came over the rail and fastened itself on Charlie, the steward was ambling forward to the galley for the cabin coffee. On seeing the sailor dragged violently over the rail, he stopped and stared in amazement, trying to imagine what had happened to the man and thinking that, perhaps, he had gone suddenly insane. The reeling gait of old Charlie, however, his struggles and the manner in which he went over the rail, convinced the steward that something had hold of him. His smooth-shaven face, round and placid, became puckered with anxiety and he stared, in growing consternation, at the struggle that developed between the men of the watch and the tapering tentacles that whipped over the rail in dozens. While he stood watching this primitive contest, a tentacle flung itself round his portly waist and dragged him down before his whimper could rise to a scream of terror.

The cook, with his flaming hair, came out of the galley with a carving knife and tried to run aft to the poop, but was caught. He slashed off the tentacle, but was seized by others and dragged over, the severed tentacle clinging to his body. The men of the starboard watch turned out raving, with drawn knives in ready hands. They had to divide forces to protect themselves on both sides, as the tentacles were now swaying above each rail from forecastle to poop. Though they fought with fury and some skill, they had small chance to win against such desperate odds. Some of them went into the rigging to get out of reach by climbing aloft, but the men who tried that exposed themselves to the beasts lurking below and were snatched away promptly. There were too many tentacles to be cut, and even when they were slashed through they continued to cling round a man's body. They had suction cups on their undersides and rings of sharp claws within these.

"There's the answer," said the mate to the skipper, when the battle began after the death of old Charlie. "The things sticking to the bottom are giant octopuses. They're the biggest things in the sea, except for the whales and only the sperm whale can tackle them. He feeds on them and sometimes they feed on him, if they can hold him down till he drowns. I'll get a knife and give the men a hand."

"Better do that than stand here telling me things I already know," the skipper retorted, sharply. "There's men dying forrid there."

The mate hurried to the companion on the way to his room for a hunting knife he kept there—a beautiful weapon hitherto useless, with an eight-inch blade as sharp as a razor. The octopus which had folded itself over the stern and jammed the rudder, aware that his companions were obtaining food from the top of this rock-like mass they were clinging to, flung two tentacles over the taffrail and waved one of them in Mister Mergam's direction.

"Look out, sir!" the man at the wheel screamed a warning.

Mister Mergam was just about to descend the companionway when he heard this cry, and he threw a swift glance over his shoulder, saw the thing flicking toward him and tried to jump down the companionway. He was too late. The tentacle wrapped itself round his chest and tightened. He strained against it, uttering a faint grunt, and braced himself with hands and feet against the hatch.

"Bring a knife, sir, and cut me loose," he implored the captain, who stared at him in horror and rushed away for a knife, going down the poop ladder to the door leading to the cabin from the main deck.

The other tentacle found the man at the wheel and caught him round the waist, binding one arm to his side, but leaving the other free. It was the rule aboard the *Unicorn* that no seaman should wear

(*please turn over*)

Continuing Fire Down Below

by Captain William Outerson

a knife while standing his trick at the wheel; therefore Thomson carried none. He knew that human strength could not prevail against the power of these tentacles, though they could be cut and he waited for the return of the skipper, with the knife. Meantime, he made a sudden jerk and dragged the tentacle a couple of feet toward him, wrapped two turns round a spoke of the wheel and held it fast there. It required desperate strength to do that with one hand, and he succeeded only because he was an exceptionally strong man. Now the octopus could not drag him over the side without breaking the spoke, which was teakwood and very tough.

The mate had nothing but his hands and these could not serve him. A sharp axe was hung on the bulkhead a few steps below him in the companionway, and he made supreme efforts to go down there against the pull of the beast to secure this weapon. His efforts were unsuccessful, for the octopus tightened its grip till he groaned with the pain of it.

Though the skipper had not been gone more than a few seconds, Mister Mergam thought he would never come back and cried in a gasping voice for him to hurry. Captain Garton shouted that he could not find the knife in the mate's cabin and was bringing the axe from the bulkhead. He was coming right up.

"For God's sake, hurry!" the mate entreated. "The brute's crushing me."

The skipper wrenched the axe out of the slings and staggered up the companion to cut Mister Mergam free, but as he reached him the mate was dragged violently away from the hatch. Captain Garton followed in urgent pursuit. Dashing out on deck, he made a swift step toward the unfortunate mate and swung up the axe for a severing stroke, but before the blade fell, Mister Mergam was whipped with a crash against the taffrail and went down over the side.

The man at the wheel found it difficult to hold against the pull of the octopus, even with a double turn of the tentacle round the spoke. He was gasping and purple in the face and the harder he strove against it, the tighter the tentacle was drawn. He was rapidly becoming exhausted. After peering over the side for a few precious moments to see what became of his lost mate, the skipper drew back from the rail horrified and trembling. He was not a strong man. Turning toward the wheel, he noted the perilous plight of the man there and stumbled across the deck, intending to sever the tentacle where it was wrapped round the spoke. In his condition of quaking repulsion he could hardly lift the axe and stood for seconds trying to swing it above his head.

The octopus jamming the rudder eased its pressure down there and the wheel spun round under the pull of the tentacle, which slipped off the spoke. Thomson was hurtled across the poop and over the side, crashing against the skipper and knocking him down. The axe fell from Captain Garton's hands and he rose, staggering, to pick it up. As he seized it he saw another tentacle whipping over the rail towards him and, in a surge of blind fury, he swung the axe, which left his hands and went flashing into the sea. He swooned when the tentacle gripped him and the octopus drew him down.

Cowering on the forecastle head, the man on look-out saw the last of the crew go down to feed the octopuses and his mind roved in every direction, seeking a means of saving his life. Up to the present no tentacles had come over the head rail and he stood absolutely still, hoping they would not find him.

In this he was disappointed. One of them came up and waved about, drawing nearer every second. Out of his mind with terror, he sprang to the rail and saw in the water below the appalling face of an octopus. Taking his knife by the blade, he threw it with miraculous aim and saw it sink out of sight in the eye of the beast, which went into a tremendous flurry. Looking aft, the man saw that there were few tentacles now waving over the main deck, and he crept down the ladder to look for a knife. Stealing along the port side, he searched eagerly, but could find none; returned along the starboard side and met the same result. All the men had gone down fighting with the knives and hook-pots in their hands. Reaching the fore hatch, he decided to enter the forecastle and shut the door. The ports were already closed. But he was just a moment too late. They got him.

A little while later a pod of sperm whales came up to blow not far from the *Unicorn*, and the octopuses, feeling the near presence of their deadly enemies, went away from there and returned to the deep places.

The ship *Merivale*, heading eastward some days out of New York, sighted a ship with all sail set. She was observed to behave in an erratic manner and appeared to be abandoned, since there was nobody at the wheel or about the decks. In the gentle breeze that was blowing shortly after sunrise, the strange vessel bore away to the west, came up in the wind with all her canvas flapping, paid off slowly and bore away again; repeating this endlessly. The skipper and the second mate of the *Merivale* watched her queer behaviour from the poop and, as no answer was made to their signals, a boat was sent off to investigate.

The boat pulled alongside the *Unicorn* and the second mate was boosted to the rail. The men hove up the boat's painter, which he made fast, and scrambled up beside him. Except for some stains of coffee on the fore deck, which had not completely dried, the decks were clear and shipshape. In the cabin the second mate noticed that the table was set for coffee, but the dishes had not been used. He scratched his head in complete bewilderment. All the boats were in the chocks, their covers untouched, and there was no sign of disease or mutiny. As he stood pondering the mysterious situation, one of his men came aft and halted in front of him.

"They ain't been gone very long, sir," he reported. "The fire's still fresh in the galley stove."

A MAN AND THE PLUMBING

by A. C. BARRETT

Yakouba, a young French priest was sent out to Africa, and found the life and people of Timbuktu so appealing after the sophistication of France that he abandoned the church, married a local woman, and settled down in a great mud "palace," but he is greatly disappointed. Below is a last picture of the Baroness von Wagner, self-styled Empress of the Galapagos, whose story is an astonishing and tragic one

YOU'LL BE GLAD TO GET BACK!

So many people express the desire, these dark winter days, to " get away from it all " that we thought it would be interesting to find out what happened to those few who did try to escape the common round. It is not inspiring

BY VINCENT BROME

EVERY year we exercise our wits to devise some new joke about the utter faithlessness of English weather, but there is one thing in the twisted vagaries of our climate on which we can rely—a fog in November. With far more certainty the South Sea Islanders expect the eleventh month of the year to produce brilliant sunshine.

I wonder how often, coughing your way through an English fog, you've dreamt about an island paradise in the Pacific, and wished that you had the courage to go and live the simple life in natural surroundings? We all dream of it at some time. More particularly in November. Joseph Reeders has done more than dream. He's gone.

Reeders had a reputation for reliability. You were aware of a certain solidity about the man making you believe he would never act impulsively. For years he entertained New York right royally, arranging parties and receptions reminiscent of ancient Rome. He had endless friends. There were women who extolled his virtues extravagantly; men who believed in him absolutely.

All of which made his sudden dash for the South Seas the more amazing. A small sailing boat carried Reeders down the far coasts of the Friendly Islands to a tiny fragment of coral, white and glistening with all the pristine beauty of something newly emerged from the crystalline seas, but lacking entirely any fragment of modern civilisation.

Reeders had tired of twentieth century America. The noise, the bustle, the display, were suddenly without meaning. He intended to spend the rest of his life in the leisured quiet of his South Sea island where only the sounds of the wind and the sea can ever disturb him.

It's an odd business trying to forget this modern world. Hundreds of people have attempted it before Reeders. In one of those blinding flashes of the obvious they suddenly realised the artificiality of their lives and decided to go back to nature.

More common is the desire to break down the routine, overcome the tyranny of typewriter, forget the 9.10 ever existed. The dismaying complications of modern life, its nerve-shattering speed and endless responsibilities, allied to the unending months of an English winter, simply thrust on you, in periods of depression, a desire either to go and jump in a lake, or to run away from it all by less drastic means.

The vision splendid—an island paradise; dreaming on far-off shores in sunshine and gentle abandon—

(*please turn to page* 10)

Alain Gerbault, once a leading French lawn tennis player, is now living alone in a small bungalow in Tahiti. He has been sailing the high seas alone since 1923, when he suddenly cancelled all his tennis plans and sailed to New York in a tiny cutter, the *Firecrest*. Since, he has made 37,000-mile round-the-world voyage alone in another small boat, and he once refused the kingship of one of the Marquesas, in the Pacific

Continuing YOU'LL BE GLAD TO GET BACK
by Vincent Brome

settles amid an ocean of income tax, rent, licences, work and worry. We want to run away from everything this jaded civilisation has to offer. And some of us run.

Well, it's a great idea this island-escape business but somehow it just doesn't work. Gentlemen down a thousand yesterdays of history, in varying degrees of despair, have 'done a guy' from different civilisations, without finding what they wanted.

Paul Gauguin, famous French painter, got the escape-bug in his veins when Paris and its diversions began to pall. He left his wife, children, everything, and fled to a South Sea refuge. In the beginning it was grand. This leisurely life in eternal sunshine offered everything he wanted. He no longer imbibed culture. No longer listened to cultivated cleverness. There was just quiet, sea and sunshine.

His little idyll lasted longer than usual. Then, gradually and inevitably, a new set of troubles began to intrude. They were troubles we don't suspect until we've overcome the first fine raptures of communing with nature. But they are part of nature itself.

Gauguin began to feel the loneliness of his island. Then he wanted to hear cultured conversation again. A sense of space which was empty space began to grow upon him.

Finally Gauguin died what has been described as "a lonely and bitter death, overwhelmed by the very place he thought would be his refuge."

Barbellion, the writer, had a similar experience. He left England for the South Seas. Certainly he had the added incentive of bad health, but very soon the same reactions began to make themselves felt. Eventually he sat down and wrote the "Diary of a Disappointed Man."

In more recent years there is the astonishing story of Yakouba, the white monk of Timbuktu. When Yakouba first sighted across sand and scrub the grey, huddled mass of Timbuktu, he was an up-and-coming young priest sent out by Cardinal Lavigerie. Already Yakouba had distinguished himself, and was in high favour with his superiors. He quickly found new affinities in Timbuktu.

The life and the people appealed to him after the intense sophistications of France.

He made an excellent impression, but by devious means rumours filtered back to the Maison Carrée that everything was not as it should be. Shortly afterwards Yakouba found himself forced to decide whether he would defend himself against these rumours, or abandon the Church and the life sophisticate for the simpler ways of Timbuktu. He chose Timbuktu.

Yakouba now lives an extraordinary life in his far retreat. He has married a native woman, Salama, and they have several children. Their house is a great mud "palace"; it has walls three feet thick, a huge courtyard, terrace and reception hall. The street outside is the sand of the desert.

But all is not well with Yakouba. Looking back from the maturity of an age long past irony, cynicism and all the minor bitternesses of life, he knows he has not found the peace of soul and happiness he sought.

Run away from life how or where we will, we never seem to realise the vision splendid. Depart into the high mountain fastnesses, go down to some forgotten island, bury yourself in the sands of the desert, rove the seas in a sailing boat, each and all, they offer new and glorious freedoms—for a while. Then the rot sets in.

Major Edwyn Tyrrell-Beck revealed a startling plan last year.

"For a long time," he said, "a number of us have been dissatisfied, sickened by the trend of civilised life. There is the ever-present threat of war, taxes, and the unhealthy mode of living. We want to get away from it all—to find a little haven of refuge and peace. It's my wife's idea. . . . It's not completely worked out yet. The first job is to find a suitable island. . . .

"Our idea is to have a colony. Native labour is cheap, and we believe it will be marvellous to get away from all the stress and fuss of modern civilisation. The founder members are well-known people who think as we do. . . ."

This, perhaps, is the ideal method of escape. Not to escape completely, but to migrate in small microcosms with certain of civilisation's elementary conveniences.

Immediately the number of emigrants falls below a dozen it seems to cause trouble. For instance, there is the astonishing case of the Baroness von Wagner, self-styled Empress of the Galapagos.

There are various versions of this story, but I found Philip Page's the most convincing.

When the Baroness von Wagner arrived at Post Office Bay, Floreana, there were one or two inhabitants scattered about the island.

She landed with two young Germans, Lorenz and Philippson. At that time she was wrapt up in the somewhat frail Lorenz, and with him visited the other inhabitants of the island, including Dr. Ritter and Frau Strauch, who had been living there for two years.

Ritter was a Berlin doctor, and Frau Strauch a schoolmaster's wife. They had decided to abandon the ways of civilised life for the peace and quiet of a Pacific island where they might commune with nature and read Nietzsche.

Social relations between these four people developed along normal lines until the Baroness began to tire of Lorenz and turned her attentions to Philippson. Shortly afterwards Lorenz and Philippson started fighting.

Philippson, much the stronger man, always beat the frail Lorenz. Thus, within a short time the Baroness's search for an island paradise—she called the hut where she slept the Hacienda Paradiso—brought worse trouble than is normal to our most civilised of cities.

But this was the beginning only of a drama far more grim than most of the "real-life-stark-stupendous" films they put up so many lights about.

The arrival of Arends seems to have set the story on the high road to tragedy. In a very short time Arends had out-rivalled both Lorenz and Philippson, and the Baroness was giving him every possible attention.

Neglected, Philippson vented his spleen on poor Lorenz. There ensued many bitter scenes between them, which culminated in Philippson throwing a plate of soup at the Baroness.

Then one night Dr. Ritter received an urgent summons for help. By some mysterious means Arends had been shot. Perhaps I ought to explain at this point that most acknowledged authorities on this story—and they are few—describe the Countess as a somewhat flamboyant person much given to romanticising her island experiences in American papers, and to walking her paradise with a revolver at her hip.

How exactly Arends was shot remains obscure, but he decided that he had had enough. He left by the next boat.

A shrill scream in the night was the next indication the Ritters had of further trouble. The following day Lorenz visited them and explained that the Baroness and Philippson had sighted a yacht approaching the island, found it brought friends of theirs, and decided to leave the Paradiso for good and all.

That shrill scream the previous night was the one snag in Lorenz's story, but he seemed an altogether new being and elatedly told the Ritters that he, too, was leaving the island. He did. He went off with a man called Nuggerud in a small fishing boat. They were wrecked on a nearby island and died of hunger and thirst.

Later investigation closely associates Lorenz with the death of the Baroness and Philippson. In fact, in certain quarters, it is assumed that he murdered them. In any case they have never been seen since. Meanwhile Dr. Ritter died and Frau Strauch returned to Germany.

Such was the grisly end to this search for a South Seas refuge. An extreme case, of course, but one that seems to indicate several things. Stripping away human failings is extremely difficult. Island refugees may even exaggerate them. Loneliness and changed environment tend to unbalance normally sensitive individuals.

Within recent years Noel Coward disappeared to a South Sea Island. He had collapsed in his dressing room after playing Lewis Dodd for just over three weeks.

He stayed in bed for some days, and then sailed for New York. Shortly afterwards he felt "suddenly sick of the theatre and everything to do with it; sick of cities and high buildings and people and screeching traffic."

Finally he decided that he would best forget this modern world on an island in the far Pacific. He sailed for Honolulu. There for endless days he idled time away lying on the sand, reading and wandering. Work he put firmly aside.

He had the world as so many of us crave it, yet within a comparatively short time . . . "My mind's eye blinked resentfully at the vivid colours all round me and ached for the gentle greens and greys of Kentish marshes. . . . A longing to be within reach of the things and people I knew tugged at my heart-strings . . . making me irritable."

He, too, came back.

Rupert Brooke was yet another who fell for the fascination of Samoa, Fiji and Honolulu. He went off to the islands; was ravished by them; but periodically, in his writings, you come upon fragments like this. . . .

"It's all true about the South Seas. I get a little tired of it at moments. . . ."

More significant still. "One's European literary soul begins to be haunted by strange doubts and shaken with fundamental, fantastic misgivings. I think I shall return home."

From all this one very obvious conclusion emerges. We belong to this modern world. We are far too much part of it ever to run away completely from twentieth century life and live alone in happiness. Desert the sophisticated ways of modernity for some forgotten isle set in a waste of water, and you may find temporary happiness. But it won't last.

The ideal solution of the whole business seems to centre in a three months jaunt every year to the South Seas. Glibly said but quite impossible for most folk.

Well, there are three courses to choose from. You abandon your job and become a fisherman in some remote Pacific spot. You deny yourself a holiday for six years and allow your holidays to accumulate. You save sufficient to keep you for three months. Personally I'd scrap the lot. I enjoy my two weeks in Devonshire quite well, thank you.

"Stop ! Stop !" he yelled, but the car only picked up greater speed

THE LAST WALL

SHORT SHORT STORY of a man who was quite willing to die for happiness

BY DONALD S. AITKEN

ILLUSTRATED BY LENDON

JOHN FLETCHER sat staring out into the blackness of the raging night. Located near the summit of Hunter's Hill, Crest Manor was getting the full brunt of the storm. Pelting rain deluged the old stone house, flowing down the window-glass in a continuous sheet. The lights of Bradhampton, visible on a clear night in the valley below, were blotted out now.

John Fletcher knew that this would probably be the last storm he would witness from Crest Manor. In a few days the house was going to pass from him, together with most of his wealth. He would become a comparatively poor man.

This knowledge brought no sadness to the elderly, grey-haired man. On the contrary, he was completely happy for, perhaps, the first time in his life.

Suddenly, the old man's expression changed. He rose from his chair and stepped closer to the window. Outside in the storm, twin beams of light, blurred by the rain, had appeared. A car was labouring slowly up the steep, gravelled driveway. Vague uneasiness, such as he had not felt for years, took possession of John Fletcher. Who could be coming to Crest Manor so late—and on such a night as this?

He was already at the front door when the taxi-cab drew up outside. A man carrying a suitcase hurried up the steps.

The stranger's face, revealed now in the yellow light of the hall, produced a staggering effect on the old man.

"Garrett?" he gasped. "Warder Garrett?"

"Not 'Warder' any more," the tall man said. "After you got clear away, there was a prison investigation. They never actually proved anything against me, but I was sacked just the same."

Fletcher moistened his pale lips nervously.

"What do you want?"

Garrett threw a quick glance around. "Anybody else here with you?"

"Just—just my housekeeper," Fletcher said.

"Good. Then we can have a chat together. Afterward, you'll have to put me up for the night. I sent the cab back to town."

A few minutes later the two men were seated in the study.

Garrett stretched out his long legs. "I'd often wondered to myself what became of you, Fletcher. It was a bit of luck for me, spotting your picture in the paper yesterday. Done pretty well, haven't you—for an escaped lifer?"

The old man's fingers clawed desperately at the arms of his chair.

"What is it you want?"

Garrett pulled a leather pouch, worn and greasy, from the pocket of his shabby suit.

"Tell me," he asked, "was all that stuff I read in the paper true? About you donating this house and most of your wealth to some fool charity."

"Yes, it's true."

"Looks like I got here just in time, then."

Fear struck the old man's face. "How much do you want?"

"That's better kind of talk. Things haven't been going so well for me. The thousand pounds I got for helping you escape didn't last me long. I've been down and out most of the time since; I was never able to make money like you. But that's all done with. From now on I'm going to be the one to live like a toff." Garrett leaned forward and his eyes narrowed greedily. "I want everything, Fletcher. This house, your money—everything you were planning to give away."

The old man shook his grey head. "There's a lot more to it than that." His voice took on a new earnestness. "For the past eleven years, Garrett, I've lived with only one thought in mind—to atone for my early life. To try and make up for the wrongs I did. The money I have now I made in business—honestly. My heart's set on doing something worth while before I die. Crest Manor is going to be made into a modern hospital for children.

Garrett scowled. "You mean you're going to let me send you back inside?"

John Fletcher collapsed weakly in his chair and mopped perspiration from his brow.

"You've got to give me time!" he said in a shaky voice. "Time to think things over."

As though confident of ultimate victory, Garrett smiled. "All right, then. I'll give you until morning. A night's sleep is what I need right now. I'm dog tired."

After giving Garrett a bed for the night, John Fletcher returned to the study. As he sank into a chair, he tried to steel himself to a resolve to defy Garrett in the morning. But could he go back to those walls? Stone walls? Barred doors? Bolts? Locks? No, he could never go back.

Then, quite suddenly, John Fletcher saw the way out. The solution.

Death—for himself. But not a long, lingering death behind prison walls. A quick, merciful one. By his own hand—now!

Yes, that was the best way out. His will, already drawn up, provided for the disposition of his wealth as he desired it. Garrett would be cheated out of his blood money.

Worry and indecision vanished from the old man's face. He got up and stretched his legs across the study carpet. Something lying on the corner of his desk caught his eye. He picked it up. It was a tobacco pouch—Garrett's. The ex-warder must have forgotten it when he went up to bed.

From a drawer of the desk Fletcher took a small revolver and a box of cartridges. While he was loading the gun the telephone bell rang.

Fletcher lifted the receiver with his left hand. The call was from the Bradhampton police station.

"Thought we'd better warn you, Mr. Fletcher," the voice said. "A taxi-driver just came in and told us that your bridge over Black Gorge has been undermined by the storm floods. We've closed your private road at this end. The bridge is standing, but it'd never support another car. It would be suicide to attempt it."

As John Fletcher replaced the receiver, the import of the message throbbed through his brain. He would get the car out and drive down the hill in the storm. Then on to the frail bridge that spanned Black Gorge. A fifty-foot plunge to oblivion as the structure gave way. Yes, that would be better than distressing Mrs. Harrison needlessly.

He left the house by the front door and then, as he turned a corner of the house, he received a shock.

The garage lights were on. Someone was bringing the car out!

For a moment the old man stood rooted to the ground. Then he got his legs going and ran to meet the oncoming car.

"Stop! Stop!" he yelled.

But the car only picked up greater speed. Fletcher was forced to jump aside as the car hurtled by and he heard the faint echo of laughter rising momentarily above the roar of the motor.

On a bench inside the garage he found a hastily scribbed note:

> "Your luck's out, Fletcher! I came downstairs a few minutes ago for my tobacco pouch. The study door was open and I spotted you loading a gun. So that's what you were going to do—put a bullet through me while I was asleep!
>
> "I'm playing safe. To-morrow I'll be back, but to-night I'm taking your car to drive to a hotel in town.
>
> GARRETT."

The loveliest Soap you have ever used

THIS is really the loveliest soap you have ever used and a sure Safeguard Against Epidemics and dirt and germ dangers! A great big foaming lather with the "Smell of the Sea" in its creamy bubbles. Which is actually true—because Simpson Iodine Soap contains pure Iodine made from Seaweed. Almost magically your skin is cleared of every impurity and beauty blemish. Within ten days you have a skin texture ten years younger.

The more you use this Iodine Soap, the creamier and clearer and more velvety your skin becomes. Wrinkles and signs of age are gently eased away. And in the bath—you emerge with a glowing body as sweet and fresh as a dewy rose. Sweet all day—however much you perspire from Dancing or Exercise.

EPIDEMICS, DIRT AND GERMS

What a safeguard for yourself and the children against the dangers of dirt and germs and when any epidemics are about! A bath with Simpson Iodine Soap and you and all the family can really *laugh* at Contagion. Economical because it saves Doctors' bills.

DANDRUFF is caused by tiny germs in the hair roots which are destroyed instantly when you use Simpson Iodine Soap as a Shampoo. Your hair takes on a new brilliance—becomes "live" and strong, and does not fall out.

RHEUMATIC PAINS Seem to melt away in the bath when you lather freely with Simpson Iodine Soap.

FOR BABY Charms away chafes, caresses and brings wonderful ease and comfort. And for napkins and little vests—wash them with Simpson Iodine Soap—then you know that not one deadly germ is left to attack baby's susceptible little body. No danger of "catching" anything.

FALSE TEETH How clean and fresh your mouth is after cleansing your dentures with this Soap. Dissolves away cloying grease and leaves every tooth gleaming white. Germ-free, too!

SOLD EVERYWHERE

(ALL CHEMISTS, BOOTS, TIMOTHY WHITES, & TAYLORS & STORES)

IMPORTANT.

REFUSE ALL IMITATIONS. Make sure you see Mr. Simpson's photo on the green and white wrapper. A lot of cheap green soaps are being passed off as "This is the genuine Simpson Iodine Soap."

SIMPSON BRAND IODINE SOAP

KING LEMON ON A BANANA THRONE

THE TAMING OF THE CHRYSANTHEMUM LION

THE MARROW-GIRAFFE

TAKE EIGHT BANANAS . . .

IN the same way that a believer in modern art may liken his pet movement to a grapefruit because there is more in it than meets the eye, Mr. Henry Rox, the sculptor, has lightened our more melancholy moments by producing something understandable, even humorous, out of the paraphernalia that other modernists use merely to bewilder us.

When the modernist straps a lemon, four trouser buttons, six matchsticks and a false moustache to a canvas and catalogues the whole thing as a "A Politician Prepares His Answer," we are inclined to deny everything and call for proof.

Mr. Rox manhandles the same things with such dexterity and with such knowledge of our simplicity, that we can't help yelping for joy at finding something we can understand. As his medium he has used only the things we turned into little men and animals in our childhood days, but he has employed all his art to make the matchsticks and the lemon into something that really has movement, and if ever he turns a turnip into a hobgoblin's face we would expect it to wink.

Oranges, flowers, potatoes, tomatoes, and marrows all find a place in his scheme of things. Slowly his amusing little figures are appearing as magazine covers and in advertisements.

In fact we went along to Mr. Rox to ask him what about it. For he seems to have made a corner, as the city men say, in humorous sculpture, which is indeed something new.

"As a sculptor I just can't help looking at all things from a professional point of view," he said, "and I have always been finding real sculptural virtue in the beautiful shapes and surfaces of many everyday things. When not modelling statues or scenes, I would amuse myself by doing things with vegetables and fruit and flowers, giving shape to figures of my imagination in this strange medium.

HENRY ROX AT WORK ON A MODEL

"Gradually I became used to working with fragile fruits that were full of juice; I invented a special technique whereby I was able to preserve the short-lived objects. Eventually I was able to handle them as easily as stone, bronze, wood or clay.

"And then came the photography. As well as the usual problems of light and shade and focussing, there was the business of composing the figure to fit the picture and to show off its work to the best advantage. It is all very difficult."

And so from a sideline in art, this new kind of sculpture became a recognised medium for all sorts of illustrations, even becoming the subject of two books. Sculpture has given us a new movement. It is one we can appreciate as people from time immemorial have been enjoying humorous sketches and paintings that they could understand.

MASTER TOMATO TAKES A SUNBATH

Brother Longshanks makes a New Year Resolution

TROUBLE ABOARD THE CARAVAN

BY FRANCIS FOSTER

ILLUSTRATED BY ILLINGWORTH

ALTHOUGH we had our caravan, Longshanks and I occasionally spent a night at an inn. Nor is this surprising, for a caravan does not offer much comfort on a cold winter's night.

It chanced that one evening about two hours after sunset, we came to the "Pay As You Go" Inn, which is at Mumblefold in North Sussex, and being much impressed by the name and not a little an-hungered, we stopped outside and I went and asked whether accommodation for man and beast were possible.

In the bar-parlour was a man who looked quite out of place in such rustic surroundings, for he wore smart clothes and pointed brown shoes, and on his head was a trilby hat with a curled brim. On the table alongside were yellow gloves and a walking stick with a handle all of silver. He seemed vaguely familiar to me, but because he was poring over the back page of an evening paper I could not, in the dim light, see his face properly.

Well, the landlord said that he would gladly put us up; wherefore we led Ephraim, our faithful horse, into the yard behind and, unharnessing him, put him in a stall and a boy gave him some oats.

All this while I was trying to recall where I had seen the smartly dressed stranger before. When we went into the bar-parlour thereafter, the man looked up and at once I recognised him. We had met him, I recalled, in Essex when (as he had told us then) he had been prospecting for a new dog-racing track.

"Bless my soul!" Longshanks exclaimed at once. "If it isn't Mr. Harry Haster!"

"That's me," the man said briskly. "Mr. 'Arry A. 'Aster. 'Arry 'Aster fer short. Everybody knows 'Arriaster."

"And what are you doing in these parts?" I asked him, sitting down alongside.

'Arriaster winked mysteriously. "Lookin' fer someone—that's wot I'm doin'," he answered. And then, "Wot's yours, gents?"

We said "Beer," whereat in a commanding voice 'Arriaster summoned the landlord and gave the necessary order, adding that he would have a double Scotch—hot.

"D'you back the winner to-day?" he asked me conversationally.

"Winner?" I questioned. "Has there been a competition?" and for some obscure reason 'Arriaster roared in sudden mirth.

"You *are* a caution," he remarked. "Swipe me bob if you ain't! *'As there bin a competition?* Not 'arf there ain't! Yore's truly 'Arriaster was on it, too, my buck. Pulled off a packet, betcherlife. That's w'ere you want it, boy," he finished, tapping his head significantly.

I looked at Longshanks for enlightenment. Evidently he understood, for he was grinning as only Longshanks can grin.

The landlord brought the drinks and 'Arriaster stirred his whisky vigorously. Then he raised his steaming glass.

"'Ere's long legs to the baby," said he, and swallowed the drink at a gulp. "Now we'll wet the other eye. Landlord!" he bawled. "Same again. And wot'll you 'ave yerself? This is on 'Arriaster, this is. 'Arriaster's made a packet to-day, strike me ginger if 'e ain't!"

I protested that my mug of beer would take me half an hour to drink, but 'Arriaster repeated that I was "a caution" and would not be gainsaid. Wherefore before long I had two mugs of beer at my elbow, the one full and the other with but an eighth of its contents gone.

"Did you say you were looking for someone?" Longshanks asked the genial fellow.

"That's me," 'Arriaster agreed, in his quaint way. He lowered one eyelid in an extraordinary manner. "Made me pile, I 'ave; an' I gotter conscience."

Now, this was most mysterious. But then, most of his conversation was mysterious. I concluded—and doubtless Longshanks did likewise—that he had used a colloquialism that he expected us to understand, and not liking to confess ignorance, I did not ask him to explain. Nor did Longshanks question him further. 'Arriaster's next remark did not enlighten us.

"'Aving a conscience is a noosance," he added. "But there it is. Nobody can't say that yore's truly 'Arriaster, ain't got a conscience. I ain't never played the dirty on anyone yet an' I ain't goin' ter start now. That's me. Now, gents, wot'll?"

I looked at him blankly.

"Wot'll you 'ave?" he explained.

"Nothing more for me, thanks," I said hurriedly, looking at the two mugs by my side.

"Not on yore life!" 'Arriaster declared . . . . "Landlord! Same again. Then we'll 'ave one more fer the road, and after that I must 'op it."

I began to protest as vigorously as I could with decency, but 'Arriaster would have none of it. Wherefore within a minute I had three mugs at my elbow, of the which two were full and one was only a quarter empty. Longshanks was manfully emptying his second mug.

"How long will it be till supper is ready?" I asked the landlord, faintly, as he was about to withdraw.

"In about 'alf an hour, sir," he answered.

'Arriaster looked at his watch. "I shall 'ave to 'urry," he remarked. "Gotter catch a train. Goin' to Pasham."

I forbore to tell him that we were bound next day for Pasham, too, for in truth, because of his generosity where liquor was concerned, I did not want to meet him again lest he put us in an embarrassing situation. I congratulated myself that, save for him, there was no one else but Longshanks and myself in the parlour.

He stood up and went to the bar. "I'll 'ave that last one fer the road now, landlord," he said.

'Arriaster gulped down his whisky, shook us both warmly by the hand, and with a "So long, gents," he left the inn.

We did not resume our journey till late on the morrow's morning, for we were in no hurry. We were due at Pasham in the evening, and so long as we arrived by nightfall we should be in plenty of time.

About eleven o'clock, therefore, we harnessed Ephraim, who seemed loth to leave his warm stall and face the bitter wind which was blowing from the east. Then, buying some bread and cold meat for our lunch, we left that place and, walking beside the horse in order to gain warmth, we started on our way.

In this wise we tramped several miles until,

Longshanks gazed in dismay and dropped his cigar. Involuntarily, I stood up. We were all tongue-tied—all, that is, except Nell

glowing from the exercise, and wanting to say my office, I clambered into the caravan. Within a few minutes I was immersed in my breviary.

While I read I became conscious that the wind was becoming more chill. It blew across the weald in great gusts, and soon my fingers were numb. When finally a snowflake fell on to the page I was reading I knew that a blizzard was imminent.

I finished the office and closed my breviary. Flurries of snow were now frequent.

"Longshanks," I called. "I think we should take shelter somewhere. It is wrong to make poor Ephraim work in this weather. Besides, you must be getting cold."

He grunted something in reply and looked ahead. Then he pointed.

"There is a barn," he said. "Let us——"

But I had to guess the rest, for as we rounded a bend in the road, we turned in to the wind, and the force of it almost thrust me back into the caravan. I think I have never known such cold as that which then struck into my bones. As I told Longshanks—though it is doubtful whether he heard me—he was lucky to be on foot and keeping himself warm.

He stopped Ephraim, therefore, alongside the barn, having guided the horse on to the grass verge. Under the shelter of the building we were comparatively warm, though eddies of wind made me shiver. I got down from the driving-seat. Longshanks meanwhile was exploring the barn.

"It's snug inside," he reported, when he returned, "and there's nothing in it. We can take Ephraim with us."

"I hope," I said, "the weather's not going to get worse. Don't forget we are supposed to be dining with the squire in Pasham to-night."

Longshanks answered me that he had not forgotten. "Indeed," he said vulgarly, "I am looking forward to the occasion, for we haven't had a really Christian meal since we started this exceedingly uncomfortable pilgrimage. I have often wished that I were in the monastery at Dewlap, where at least the meals are regular."

"You are an exceedingly ungrateful man," I reproved him. "I——"

I stopped short, for out of a bundle of hay at the far end of the barn a head emerged. Ephraim snorted and backed.

"We seem to be intruding," I murmured to Longshanks.

The head above the hay spoke. "I didn't mean no 'arm, guv'nor," it said in a feminine voice. "Don't turn me out into the cold."

Poor thing, I reflected. Here was a wayfarer like ourselves, seeking protection from the icy blast.

"It's all right," I called back. "The barn isn't ours. We are only sheltering."

Below the head appeared a pair of shoulders, and gradually a woman emerged. She was a very large woman, near as tall as Longshanks, it seemed. And she was dressed in a most peculiar style, the which I could not possibly describe because I am ignorant of the names of the clothes which women wear.

"Are you 'on the road?' " I asked her.

She frowned. "That's as it may be," she answered.

"Of course," said I, instantly contrite—for I am not an inquisitive person. And to cover my confusion: "Longshanks has gone to get some food," I said. "Are you very hungry?"

"You've said it!" she answered.

Longshanks returned. I heaved the door to, shut out the wind, and in the gloom of the barn we three sat down on the hay-strewn floor. Longshanks had brought enamel plates and knives and forks. He divided the food and we began to eat.

"Awful day," the woman commented with her mouth full of beef.

We agreed that it was. Longshanks added conversationally that he hoped the weather would soon change. "Anyhow," he said, "we can't stay here long, for we have to be at Pasham by nightfall."

"I'm goin' to Pasham," the woman volunteered, "but I'd meant to stay here the night." She giggled. "Nell don't like the cold," she simpered. "'Ave you got a cart?" she asked, looking at Ephraim, who was standing cross-legged in his stupid way, and munching the contents of the nosebag.

"A caravan," I answered. "D'you want a lift?"

"That's reel nice of you," Nell answered. "An' I a'n't never been in a caravan."

When we had finished I went to the door and looked out. To my dismay I found that snow was falling thickly and that the ground was already well covered. The wind, if anything, was stronger than ever. It thudded against the wall of the barn and screamed in the telegraph wires above the road. The bare trees bent before the blast. It was impossible to see more than a few yards.

Longshanks had joined me. "I don't see how we can push on through this," he observed dolefully. "Think of poor Ephraim."

And indeed I was already thinking of poor Ephraim. But also I was thinking of other difficulties. For if we decided to stay here for the night, we should presumably sleep in our beds in the caravan. But what of Nell?

A smell of frowsy clothing told me that Nell had joined us.

"My!" she exclaimed. "We shan't be able to get through that. For gawd's sake shut that door! It's as cold as charity in 'ere."

Hastily I closed the door.

We sat down again, and I began to think deeply. The more I thought of the position the less I liked it. For, apart from other considerations, I had conceived a great dislike of Nell and, to my dismay, I found that she had begun to ogle Longshanks.

"Let's risk it and go," he said to me, looking very sheepish.

"Wot's the 'urry, duckie?" Nell inquired.

"I think perhaps we'd better," I agreed, looking askance at the woman. If we stayed here through the night, the position, I foresaw, would be fraught with extreme difficulty. I did not understand Nell at all.

"I'll harness Ephraim," said Longshanks with alacrity.

Nell began to protest, but Longshanks took the nosebag off the horse and led him to the door. Rather than be left alone with Nell, I braved the cold and went outside with him.

"You'd better stay here till we're ready," I told the woman.

"No fear!" she answered with a coarse oath, and followed us out. As we pulled the door into place we had to struggle with it because of the violence of the wind. Almost at once we were covered with snow. Ephraim whimpered and my heart ached for him, knowing that he had a rough journey ahead.

"But I will bear you company," I murmured, "and Longshanks shall rest his weary limbs in the caravan."

"Thanks; I'm not tired," Longshanks snapped.

"But someone will have to be in the caravan with——" I began.

"Of course," he interrupted. "Obviously that person ought to be you."

"By no means," I answered warmly.

Longshanks by this time was harnessing Ephraim. I gave him what assistance my numbed fingers would allow. Without any invitation Nell had meanwhile climbed into the caravan.

"This is like old times," she called, from the open door through which she had disappeared.

"What *do* you mean?" I asked her. "I thought you said you had never been in a caravan before?"

"I don't mean that," she answered, putting her head through the doorway. "Arsk 'im," nodding to Longshanks. "He knows wot I mean."

"She's off her head," Longshanks muttered. "Are you ready, Father?" he asked. "Hop up, and we'll start. We're all ready."

I saw that it was useless to persuade him to join our guest, and I was equally determined that I was not going to be her companion. Moreover, I wanted to think and I always think better when I am walking. Wherefore we started off, one on each side of our poor horse.

In a couple of miles we came to crossroads.

(*please turn over*)

"—the room's as fresh as outside!"

"Coming! Half an hour, is it? . . . 'um . . . now what was I thinking when Muriel called . . . ah, I know! How does this gas fire change the atmosphere? . . . The fire's been on all day, but the room's not a bit stuffy . . . let's see—the flue's a regular ventilation channel, that's obvious . . . 'um . . . then fresh air must come in under doors and window sashes . . . ah! that's it . . . easy when you work it out, my dear Watson! . . . Yes dear, coming now! Well, better let the cat in . . ."

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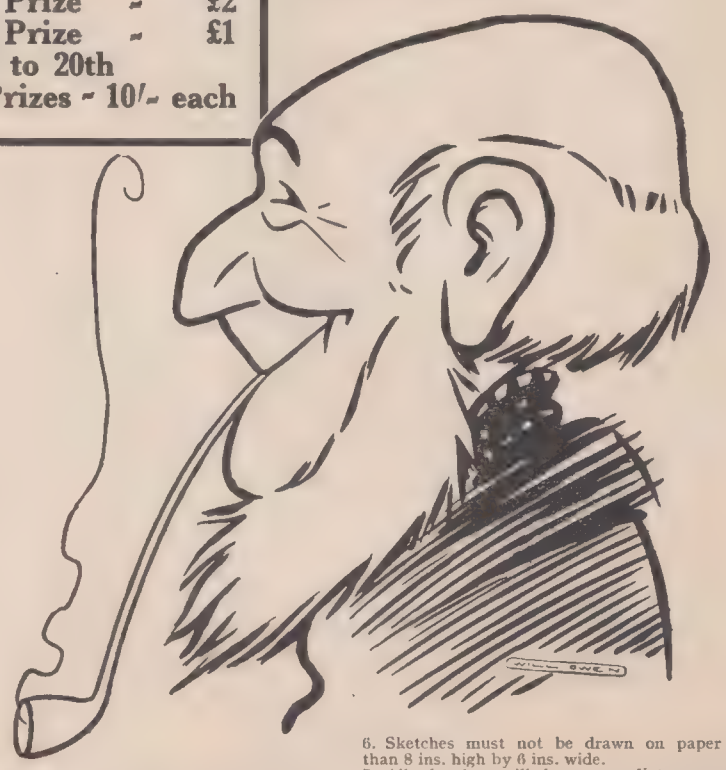

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Continuing Trouble Aboard the Caravan

by Francis Foster

Longshanks halted the horse while I went closer to the signpost in order to read its directions the better.

"It's the left road," Nell's voice came to me against the wind. "Me 'usband knows these parts well enough."

Well, what of it, I thought. Her husband was nothing to do with us.

"Don't you, duckie?" she called out again.

I turned aghast. The significance of the remark could not be mistaken. She meant Longshanks!

It is perhaps unfortunate that I have a strong sense of humour. For the life of me I could not forbear to laugh, and Nell heard me despite the gale.

"Don't you dare laugh at me!" she screamed. "I'm a respectable married woman, I am."

"Come on, Father; hurry up," Longshanks called, in an odd voice. "It's cold standing here. Which road is it?"

"The lady's told you," I chuckled.

"Don't be an ass!" he retorted; but he turned Ephraim into the left road.

"You've evidently got a mysterious past, Longshanks," I told him, as I went alongside Ephraim again. "When did you marry her?"

"Don't rag," he growled, angrily.

We had five miles yet to cover. It was an epic journey, for the wind did not abate and the snow fell more thickly the farther we went. We heard no more from Nell, however. Indeed, as I discovered later, she had sought repose on my bed.

Darkness came. We stopped awhile to light the lamps; then once more we pressed forward. Before very long we passed a house.

"We must be on the outskirts of the village," I remarked, hopefully.

Several minutes later we arrived at the Pig-in-a-Poke Inn—a very famous place to North Sussex men. Longshanks halted the caravan.

"We'd better fix up accommodation here before we go to the squire's," he said.

I joined him on the other side of the horse. "What are we going to do about Nell?" I asked in a low voice, aware that she had come to the driving-seat and was regarding us.

"Tell her we're staying here," Longshanks answered. "That's all we need do."

I was not so sure, but I hoped he was right. "Very well," I said. "You tell her while I go and see the landlord."

He demurred at once and in the end we both went to see the landlord. He readily agreed to give us a room and to stable Ephraim. Wherefore we returned soberly to the caravan. Nell was sheltering in the inn porch.

Relieved that she was out of the caravan, I seized Ephraim's bridle, intending to lead him round to the yard. Not until I had passed through the gateway did I realise that Longshanks had done the same thing—on the other side of our well-attended horse.

"This is too bad, Longshanks," I reproved him. "Why did you not stay and tell Nell what is happening?"

"I thought you were going to do that, Father," he replied. "I'll manage Ephraim. "You——"

"I'll look after Ephraim," I interrupted. "You go and tell the lady that this is the end of our journey."

In the end we both put Ephraim to bed. Then we went soberly back to the front of the inn. Nell had disappeared.

"The saints be praised!" Longshanks muttered fervently.

We went inside. A worried landlord met us in the passage.

"Sorry, gents," he said apologetically, "I've on'y got the one room. I didn't understand——"

And then I saw Nell sitting in the bar-parlour. Hastily I shut the door of the room and addressed myself to the landlord.

"We only want the one room—for just the two of us," I said. "She's nothing to do with us. All we've done is to give her a lift."

The good man looked at us dubiously. "She says she's Mrs. Longshanks," he observed. "That's your name, sir, isn't it?" he asked, looking at Longshanks.

I explained matters to him in greater detail, but he still looked dubious.

"It's a queer business," he said.

"Look here," I exclaimed anxiously—for the matter was no longer a joke. "My friend and I are dining with Squire Trehorne to-night. There's no time to lose. Show us our room, so that we can go and get tidied up. If the woman doesn't leave, you must send for a policeman."

"I don't like it, sir," said the landlord, shaking his head. "Looks mighty fishy to me."

I was about to reply when I saw that the bar-parlour door was slightly open. Evidently Nell was listening. Instead, therefore, I took the landlord's arm and drew him farther along the passage.

"Look here," I said. "You don't want to offend the squire, do you?" I disliked arguing on those lines, but I was desperate.

"Why, no," answered the landlord. "'E's my landlord. Besides——"

"Well, as I say, we're going there to dine," I went on. "He's a friend of mine——"

"All right, sir," the landlord said. "But I don't like it, mind you. I dunno 'ow I'm goin' to get rid o' that female. She can't stay 'ere. There's only one more room and there's a London gent taken that."

In the end he showed us our room, and Longshanks and I tidied ourselves and then, without venturing into the bar-parlour, started for the Hall. The wind had died down now and the snow had stopped falling.

Squire Trehorne was a widower. He was alone when Longshanks and I arrived, but, he said, after he had greeted us warmly, he had another friend coming to dinner.

"The fact of the matter is," he explained, "there's a man coming afterwards whom we've both got to see."

"Yes?" I murmured politely, when, looking worried, he stopped.

Just then the other guest was announced. His name was Dobrell. Later on, while we were eating an excellent dinner, I learnt details of what was toward.

"Dobrell's land marches with mine," the squire explained, over the port, "and there's a man who wants to buy or rent part of it just outside Horminster. The fact is he wants to construct a greyhound racing track——"

"'Arriaster!" exclaimed Longshanks and I together.

"I beg your pardon?" said the squire.

I explained.

"That's the man right enough," Mr. Dobrell said.

"But surely you're not going to let him—?" I began.

"Landowners have a bad time these days," the squire said. "We had to consider the matter very carefully. But we've decided against the project. We would have written to that effect, but Mr. Haster said he would be down this way on other business sometime and would call, and so the matter has been left in abeyance. Last evening I got a telegram from him from a neighbouring village—where you met him, I expect—to say he'd call to talk things over this evening at nine."

"It's a queer coincidence that we should have met him first of all in Essex," I said, as, our port finished, we went into the library for coffee.

We had no sooner seated ourselves before a comforting log fire than the butler entered. He murmured something to the squire. The latter looked at Longshanks queerly.

"Of course, show her in," he said, frowning nevertheless and he rose and followed the butler to the door.

Now, I had not missed that queer look which the squire had levelled at Longshanks, nor had I missed the feminine pronoun which the squire had used. Full of apprehensions, therefore, I looked at Longshanks. But he was contentedly drawing at a cigar which our host had given him.

The butler ushered in a lady. The squire, waiting by the door, began to bow and then straightened himself in amazement. The visitor was Nell!

Longshanks gasped in dismay and dropped his cigar. The squire looked at us in consternation, what time the woman beamed all round. We were all tongue-tied—all, that is, except Nell.

"Nice place you've got 'ere," she commented, leering at the squire. "A'n't you goin' to give us a drink?"

"I—I beg your pardon," the squire gasped.

I cannot describe that awful scene. Obviously the squire was at a loss to know what to do or how to behave, for Nell was a most incongruous figure.

I thought it time to take a hand, and with as much boldness as I could muster I began, "This lady is——"

I got no farther, for at that moment the butler entered again and announced, "Mr. Harry 'Aster." Nell let out a shrill scream and went white under her tan. Perhaps because he welcomed the diversion the squire immediately said, "Show him in."

Nell flopped into a chair. The rest of us, sensing drama, were on our feet. Into the room, treading jauntily and carrying his immaculate hat, yellow gloves and silver-headed cane, walked 'Arriaster. But he had not taken more than three confident strides before he stopped short and gazed spellbound at the woman in the chair.

"Nell!" he exclaimed. "My old woman!"

Nell had recovered. She stood up. She was going to speak when 'Arriaster burst out with: "After all these years! Gents, this is a fair knockaht. 'Ere I comes down to Sussex to find me long-lorst wife and can't find 'er nowhere; and d'reckly I stops lookin' fer 'er, I finds 'er! 'Ow are yer, ducky?" he exclaimed as, with outstretched arms, he advanced towards her.

"Arf a mo'," she stopped him. "Not so fast, 'Arry. You're a bigamist, and yer didn't know it."

"Bigamist!" 'Arriaster echoed in consternation, while we all watched in amazement.

"I a'n't yer wife," Nell said. "I've jest discovered the 'usband wot I married afore I married you. There 'e is." She pointed at Longshanks, who stuttered an immediate but quite unintelligible reply.

Because I knew that this was entirely untrue I could see the rich humour in the situation, and I snorted with sudden laughter. And no wonder; for of all the predicaments in which Longshanks had been placed none was so rich in comedy as this. Arriaster stared first at one, then at the other.

"Come! Come!" the squire exclaimed. "This is a most embarrassing situation. D'you mean to say——?"

"If what the lady says is true," I pointed out, "it's not Mr. Haster who's the bigamist, but herself." And sternly: "This is obviously a matter for the police. Bigamy is a serious offence in this country. If Mrs. Haster——"

She looked at me, startled.

"I'm off," exclaimed 'Arriaster. "I don't want to get mixed up in this."

Nell watched him turn. The glitter of those immaculate boots evidently caught her eye, for she looked at them. Then she caught sight of the silver-headed cane.

"'Arry," she said suddenly.

"I don't want to get mixed up in this," he repeated. "I won't give evidence against you, but if they convicts you, you'll 'ave to stand the racket."

Nell suddenly burst into tears.

"It's all right, Mr. Haster," I said. "She isn't a bigamist—at least, not so far as my friend is concerned." Then, at a loss to know how to proceed, I looked at my host. "I'm sorry about this," I said. "We gave her a lift in our caravan to-day. That's the first we've ever heard or seen of her."

'Arriaster had gone to his wife and was bending awkwardly over her.

"D'yer still love me, 'Arry?" she suddenly demanded.

"Course I do; else I shouldn't 'ave come down 'ere ter look fer you," 'Arriaster replied. "I bin looking for yer fer a long time, gal. 'Twasn't till the other day that I met yer sister, Kate, an' she told me where you was. And w'en I got down there I found you'd 'opped it."

They had apparently forgotten us entirely.

"W'y did yer vamoose, gal?" 'Arriaster inquired tenderly.

"'Cause Kate told me you was on me track," Nell sobbed, "an' I knew wot you was comin' for. I didn't want the same old trouble all over agin."

"Did yer 'ate me as much as that?" 'Arriaster asked, in wonder.

"I thought I did," she sniffed. "An' I was afraid you'd foller me; that's w'y I said about 'im," nodding towards Longshanks.

"And you don't 'ate me any more?" he asked mawkishly.

"I didn't know you'd be like this, 'Arry," she murmured, fingering first his yellow gloves and then stroking the silver handle of his walking stick.

Longshanks let out a great sigh. No doubt he was affected by this reconciliation, but I think that he was mostly concerned with his own relief from embarrassment. I grinned at him. He scowled back.

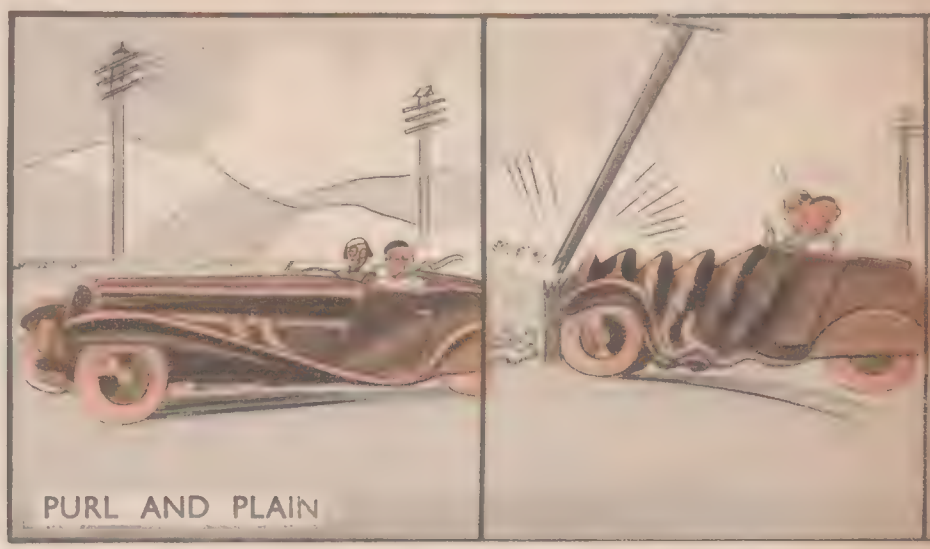
"This," he said, "is what comes of giving lifts to strange women. Never again."

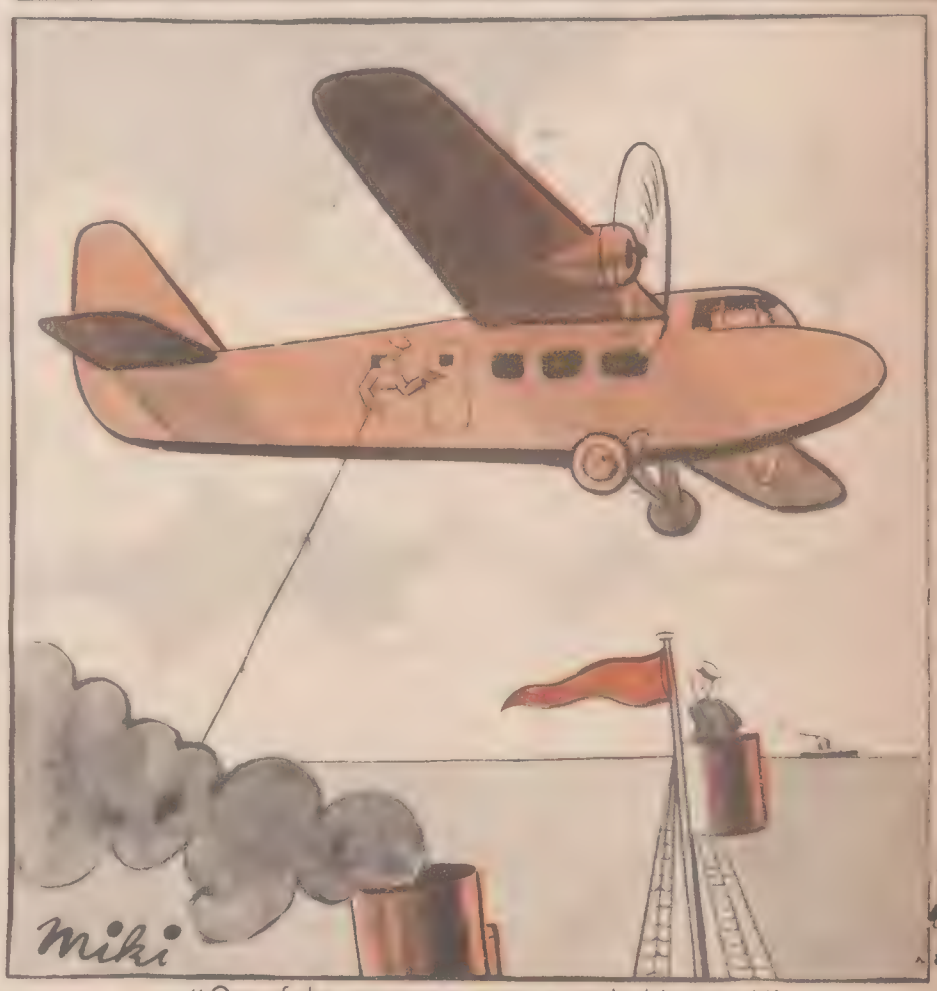
"Never again," I echoed.

Laugh

The "PASSING SHOW

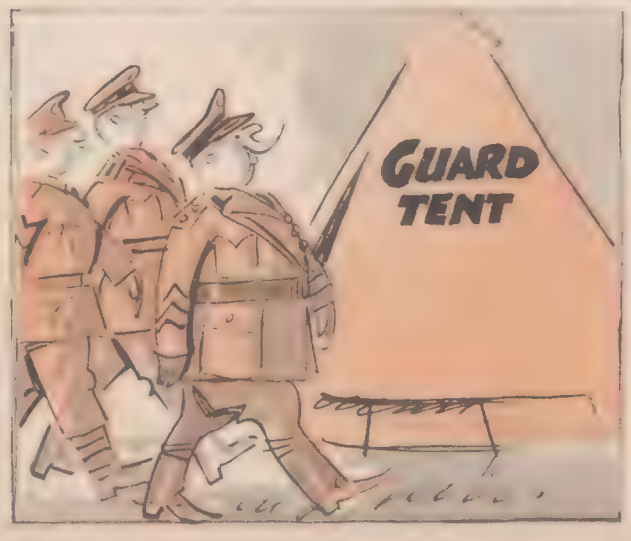
"You see, I'm always first on opening nights."





"One of the passengers wants a smoked herring!"

"Every time I ask for a raise they give me a higher chair!"



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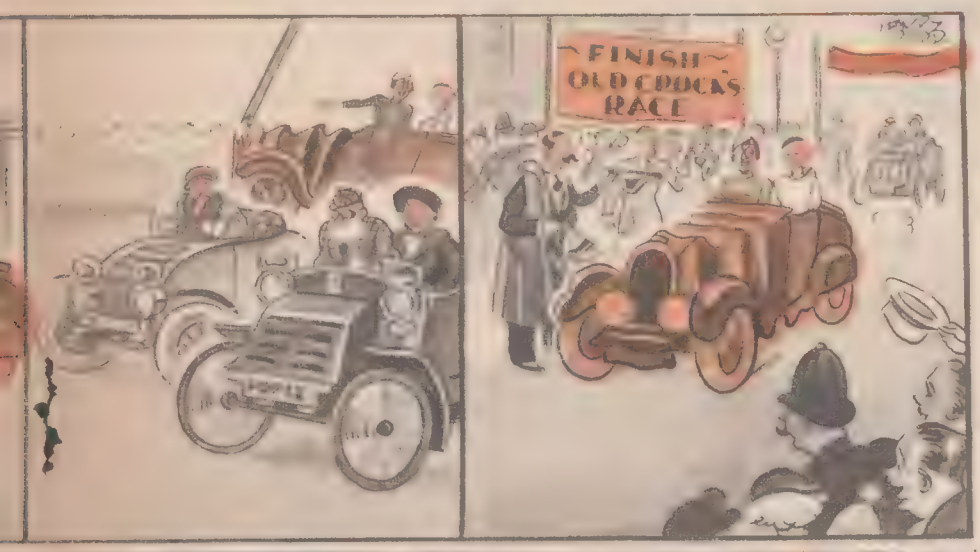
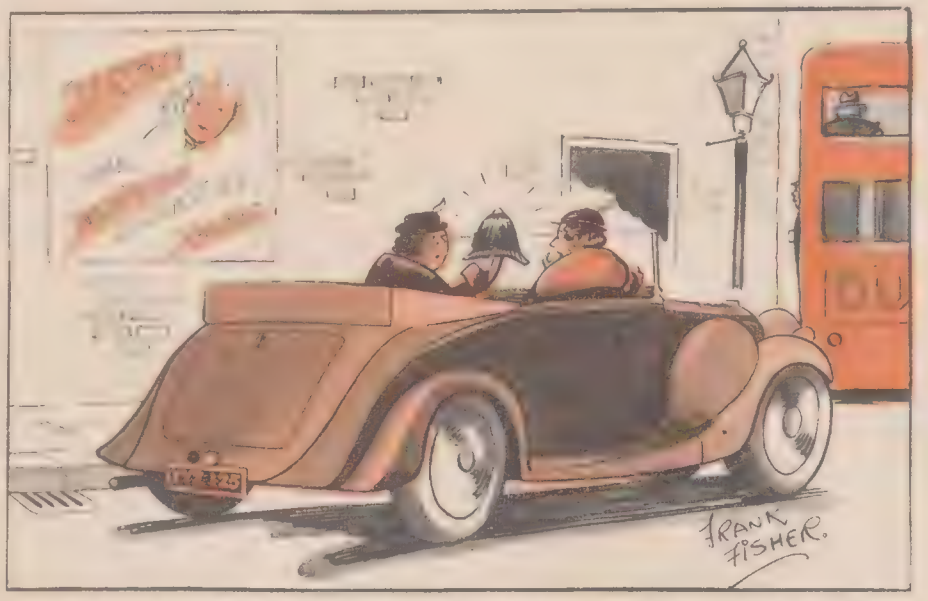


"Did I ever show you how to tie a sheep-shank?"



"I must have got hold of it when I put my arm out for you to turn!"

RETURN OF AN EAGLE

BY

STEPHEN PHILLIPS

ILLUSTRATED BY JACK GRANDFIELD

IT was a tricky business, especially when the sea was rough, for then you had to flatten your body into the cliff-face and hold your breath. Even then, if you weren't careful, a frothing, snarling edge of water might snatch you away; and then, of course, you would drown—or be pounded and broken on the rocks below.

Black they were; and often they reminded Bonniwell of dark plumes about a funeral cortége. The sea ran through and between them, and the old smugglers' caves, far below, roared and boomed and shouted.

When Bonniwell had been head keeper of the lighthouse, he had rather liked the noise, the commotion. It often gave him an idea as to what the weather might be. But now, retired from the job, he had become a sort of precarious human fly, taking eagles' eggs for collectors.

And that particular afternoon a wild sea had been raging. The noise of it rolled through the caverns like thunder. But Bonniwell was a small, compact man, quick and alert, swinging dexterously on the end of the rope.

Nevertheless, he was wet to the skin and shivering, when he reached home. It was getting dark, and the tea things were already laid.

Mrs. Bonniwell, large, comfortable, big-hearted as Kaladier's Mountain, stared at him.

"What have you got hidden under that soaking wet jacket of yours, Henry Bonniwell?" she demanded sternly.

Bonniwell sat down in his wet clothes.

"It's a baby eagle," he said. "I found it on a ledge above Thunder Cavern. I'm going to give it to Marianne."

"The poor darling," she said. "But what will the child keep it in?"

"I'll make her a cage," he said.

That was two months after the *David Warne* had gone down with all hands, fishing off the North Banks, and Marianne's father and brother had drowned with her.

But Marianne had courage; she went, smiling bravely, to the circus four months later.

She sat and watched Zoro, the lion tamer. A great gaudy, red-haired man was Zoro. And Gluck, the clown; and the Six Waltzing Ponies.

When Snider, "Prince of the Whip," entered the arena, Marianne applauded with the rest. Something about Snider attracted her. Maybe it was his dark, gleaming hair, or the recklessly glinting black eyes, or the rather cruel, sadistic twist to the full-blooded lips. . . .

The huge whip snaked out and cracked like a gun. *Crack-crack-crack* it went. . . . And then a girl in a crimson bathing-suit came running into the arena. Marianne watched breathlessly; she was strangely fascinated by the man with the whip.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he shouted. "I am now about to perform one of the most difficult feats ever attempted with an ordinary Australian stock-whip. *With a flick of the whip I shall attempt to remove two pennies placed on the young lady's eyes without inflicting so much as a scratch. . . .*"

The audience murmured disbelievingly.

Snider faced them, smiling.

"One moment, please. If you have any doubt that this is a genuine act, without any trickery of any kind, I shall be grateful if any young lady in the audience will step down and assist me." His black eyes flashed rather contemptuously over their faces.

"I assure you, ladies and gentlemen, that there is no danger at all. *Please*, I am waiting. . . ."

Calmly, her eyes fixed on his face, Marianne stepped into the ring. Snider glanced at her a little doubtfully. Marianne, in her tight-fitting costume and her little black hat perched on her head, looked so ridiculously young.

The girl in the crimson bathing-suit placed two pennies flat over Marianne's closed eyes, in such a manner that the edge of the coins protruded ever so slightly.

Paul Snider stepped back a few paces. His face, now, was set, almost strained.

Standing there, immovable as stone, calm as a lifeless statue, Marianne heard the crack of the whip, so close that it seemed almost to strike her face. Yet she felt nothing; the two pennies were still there.

Again the whip cracked, nearer this time; and Snider's face was white and tense in the glare of the naphtha flares.

Then, as the whip cracked for the third time, she felt a gentle flick across her face and one of the pennies went spinning into the air; and vaguely, as if from a great distance, she heard the applause, swelling into great volume. . . .

So Marianne went travelling with the circus. She got used to the smell of the beasts in their cages. The growls of the maned lions, the snarls of the striped cats. . . .

She was sitting, one evening, in her red and gold caravan. She heard someone come up the steps and look in at her. It was Paul.

"May I come in, Marianne?"

She made way for him, her eyes fixed on him; somehow, she had never quite got over that queer fascination which he seemed to hold for her.

He sat down and took one of her hands and caressed it gently.

"You're such a brave, cool-headed little thing," he said, as if he were a little surprised at himself. "Why, the very first time I noticed you . . ."

Passion showed in his black eyes. He snatched her close, kissing her.

"I'm mad about you," he said. "I've loved you from the very first time I——"

But Marianne, with those clear young eyes of hers, was still looking up at him.

"It isn't *love*, Paul," she said.

Marriage changed things. Paul said he must have a new assistant for his act. Using one's own wife for such a dangerous trick, he said, might upset him. That was how Guy Reeves came into the show.

Paul selected a man this time, a young, good-looking man. He shared the red and gold caravan with Paul and Marianne.

And sometimes, when Paul was practising, Marianne made tea for him and they drank it together.

The first time they did it, Guy glanced at the huge cage swinging over the caravan steps.

"That's a grim-looking bird," he said.

She smiled.

"Pedro? Do you really think so? Well, I suppose most eagles are rather—*grim*."

"Is he part of the show?"

"Oh, no, Pedro's just a pet."

By that time the eagle had grown; he was a big black, rather cadaverous bird.

"What would happen if you let him out of the cage?"

She shrugged.

"I don't know. Probably he'd fly back to the cliffs he was born on. Eagles have much the same homing instinct as pigeons, you know."

"How extraordinary," he laughed; but his eyes stared at Marianne as he said it and presently a slight flush crept into her cheeks. . . .

For Marianne was a little—extraordinary.

By that time she had come to appreciate the strain of cruelty in Paul.

One night she saw him whip a horse. . . .

She walked back to the caravan, slowly, her face very white. Guy was sitting on the steps.

"What was that awful noise?" he asked.

"It was Paul. He was whipping one of the horses."

"What for?"

She shook her head.

"I don't know," she said.

Then she put down her dark, short-haired head and began to cry. It was the first time she had cried since her father died.

Guy watched her, stricken to his very soul; a kind, clean, decent soul.

"Can't I do anything to help?" he asked, almost desperately.

"There is nothing you can do," she said, "*nothing*."

Guy rose. His face was dark with rage.

"Has he ever attempted to use that beastly whip on *you*?" he demanded.

"Oh, no," said Marianne, "oh, no, he's never done that."

"You're *lying*," Guy cried, frantically; for he worshipped the ground Marianne walked on.

"Please—please go now," Marianne said, pleadingly.

But Guy was no craven.

"Let me stay," he urged, "and settle it with him now. I—I adore you, Marianne. We could go away together . . . somewhere . . . and be happy perhaps. . . ."

"He'd kill you," said Marianne, in a frightened whisper. "He'd kill *both* of us."

She knew that to be true.

"I'm willing to take a chance," he declared, recklessly, "if *you* are."

Marianne clung to him a little. She seemed to be

Lured by the crack of the whip and the drumming of hooves, she joined the circus—a tragic decision

no longer brave and calm and clear-headed. She was *afraid*. Not for her own sake, for life had ceased to interest her, but for Guy's.

She loved him; with all her heart and soul she loved him. That was why she was so *afraid*. . . .

Her own life meant nothing to her now; its significance had gone.

She knew only that she must protect Guy; at any cost, she must protect him.

He was still so young, almost a boy. . . .

And then the caravan door swung open and she saw Paul standing there.

"What a pretty scene," he sneered.

Then, in fury, he turned on Guy.

"Get outside, you young fool," he snarled.

From the edges of the caravan roof the rain dripped heavily. Marianne stood there. Her arms were limp-hanging; only the fingers were clenched —clenched so tightly that the knuckles showed white and bloodless through the stretched skin.

"It isn't the first time you and he have been here —*alone*," Paul said.

"No," she said, "it isn't the first time. . . ."

"So you *admit* it, eh?"

"I admit . . . *what*?"

"Why, that he and you . . ."

"I admit," she said steadily, "only that I love him, and that he . . . loves me. Now, are you satisfied, Paul?"

"*Satisfied!*" His voice was a shout. He sprang past her, snatching open a drawer. When he turned, she saw that he was gripping a small, pearl-handled revolver.

Just a toy it was, so small it could be placed in a woman's handbag. . . .

She faced him calmly, not caring.

"You——" he said, and then he lifted the toy revolver to shoot; but suddenly someone banged on the caravan door.

It was Zoro, the lion tamer. His untidy red hair gleamed against the squalid wetness of the night.

As he stared into the caravan, his mouth began to fall open in surprise.

"Why, what . . .?"

"Never mind," said Paul grimly. "What do you want, Zoro?"

The lion tamer stared at him an instant.

"They're putting on your act half an hour earlier to-night," he said. "Mr. Meiklejohn sent me across to tell you, Paul."

"Thanks," said Paul, "thanks, Zoro." He laughed. "We—we were just practising a new act . . ."

"Is that so?" said Zoro; and, in complete disbelief, his red head vanished again and the door shut. . . .

Paul dropped the pearl-handled toy into the drawer. He began to dress hurriedly. There was a flame in those black eyes of his—a horrid, *cruel* flame. . . .

He stooped and picked up the huge stockwhip. At the door, pausing, he looked back at Marianne.

"*He has such a nice pair of eyes*," he said.

Paul went out into the rainy night, leaving the long whip lying on the caravan floor. He would return for that later, she knew; before he went into the ring to go through his act with Guy.

Marianne's face was as white as a sheet. "*He has such a nice pair of eyes* . . ." The words seemed burned into her brain. She knew what he had meant. It would be an easy matter for him to miscalculate the merest fraction of an inch, to send that whip curling and lashing across Guy's face, across his eyes, *blinding* him. . . .

Just an accident, Paul would say; a very regrettable accident.

Her first impulse was to rush out and tell Guy. But then she realised that it would be useless. Guy would never let down the act at the last moment like that; he was made of too stern a stuff.

And, as she realised this, a great calmness, a strange peace descended upon her.

Outside in the rain, smoking a cigarette, Zoro the lion tamer stood under an awning and stared curiously at the red and gold caravan.

It was Paul, stumbling out of the caravan twenty minutes later, shouting wildly, who made Zoro start forward.

Paul was waving his hands about.

"It's Marianne," he shouted. "Don't you hear me? *Marianne* . . . She's shot herself. . . ."

Zoro flung him out of the way and rushed into the caravan. Marianne was lying there, on the floor, dead; there was a tiny round hole in her temple. . . .

Paul had gone rushing into the night like a madman.

Zoro yelled to someone to get the police. They came. There was a crowd outside the caravan. Suddenly one of the police officers turned to Zoro.

"This isn't suicide," he said. "We can't find the weapon. A dead person can't hide a gun, you know. . . ."

Zoro stared, open-mouthed.

"Where's her husband?" the officer asked.

"The last I saw of him," Zoro stammered, "he was going towards the roadway. . . ."

The police picked Paul up three hours later, cowering in a street doorway. But, when they searched him, they didn't find the weapon. They tore the red and gold caravan apart. They searched every inch of ground, every blade of grass almost; but they never found the gun. . . .

At the trial of Paul Snider, for the murder of his wife, they said he must have thrown it away in his flight from the circus ground. . . .

Bonniwell, clinging precariously to the cliff-face, noticed the great eagle on the ledge above. One of its wings was broken. . . . It was lying, almost lifeless, on the pitted, seamy surface; and Bonniwell started to climb towards it. When he got near enough, he noticed that something was attached to one of its legs—attached with a piece of strong white twine.

It was a small pearl-handled revolver.

As Bonniwell stared at it, gaping, the wounded eagle lifted itself. It beat against the cliff, then fell like a stone into the sea below. . . .

Bonniwell hung there an instant, staring; then, quickly, he started to climb to the top of the cliffs. A steady rain was falling and the sea looked drear and dark; and suddenly he remembered that Paul Snider had been hanged two mornings ago. . . .

Quietly he went into the house. Tea was laid. He sat down. Mrs. Bonniwell began to pour out the tea.

"Marianne's eagle's back on the cliffs," he said suddenly. "At least, it *was*. . . ."

"The poor darling," she said; she was thinking of poor little Marianne, so brutally done to death. . . .

But Bonniwell, sitting there, had another vision. The vision of a tired, desperate woman . . . a woman who had ceased to care what happened to herself . . . whose only thought was to save the man she loved, in the only way she could think of. . . .

And he could almost see Marianne standing there, looking up at the big black eagle in his cage. . . . He could almost see her take Pedro into the caravan; for Pedro was a very tame eagle who would harm no one, least of all Marianne. He could see Marianne tying the little revolver to the eagle's foot and leaving the caravan window wide open. . . and pressing the trigger. . . .

He could almost see the eagle flying out of the window, into the darkness, into the rain. . . .

Bonniwell looked up.

He stared at his wife questioningly, almost expectantly.

Mrs. Bonniwell picked up some knitting.

"You're letting your tea get cold," she said.

When he turned, she saw that he was gripping a small, pearl-handled revolver. She faced him calmly, not caring. "You——," he said, and lifted the toy revolver to shoot

COLDS and 'FLU

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MODEL BY WORTH, PARIS

VIRGINIA HALL'S PAGE

NEW YORK, TUESDAY

WHEN I leave here for England at the end of the week, I will be very sorry to have to take my farewells of the people who have been so kind and friendly and helpful during my few weeks in this modern Babylon.

Never before have I found so many people so eager to be friendly and hospitable. In fact, I have become so attached to this wonder city and its people that I found myself referring to it as "home" when I visited Washington last week-end.

Yes, I'll just hate to see the last of these exciting skyscrapers, even though it will be a relief to get away from the inevitable gum-chewing that so annoys me.

New York never ceases to be surprising. Small things kept me so wonder-eyed the first few weeks that I began to feel very much like a country cousin "up for t'cup." I thought that if things went on in this way I would permanently register a look of surprise. So I tried to look a little more sophisticated and asked Old New Yorkers when it was that they ceased to be surprised. Instead of laughing at me they quite seriously agreed that they were still doing their best to live through a day without being surprised. Every time I set out to go shopping I was sidetracked by something different.

★ For instance, as I walked out of my hotel door yesterday a fire-engine passed. Standing on the very front of it, balancing precariously and thoroughly enjoying himself, was a large Dalmatian "plum-pudding" dog.

I wasn't too sure that it might be another publicity stunt, but now I learn that many New York fire engines have their dog mascots. It is an old American custom dating back to the horse-drawn engines when there were always dogs about the stables fraternising with men and horses. It certainly was grand to see that spotted dog *smiling* at the thought of a good fire!

This is certainly a woman's country. Women are not only made a fuss of, but also they are allowed to hold interesting and responsible jobs.

One of the best friends I have made here is a charming woman working in one of the most exclusive Fifth Avenue stores where she advises other women just what they should wear.

Someone may come in to see her (and she's so busy that it is wise to make an appointment) to say, "I have to speak at a meeting next week at the American Women's Club. What should I wear?"

And she will advise right down to the smallest detail.

The customer will not have to move. Everything will be brought from different departments by experts, even her hair and manicure appointments will be made for her.

★ All the customer has to do is to pay the bill, and, as I have already said, women are so spoiled in this country that probably her husband will come across with the required cheque without a murmur.

My friend introduced me to the head-cutter in the tailoring department of her store. And after he had admired the typically English tailored tweed suit I was wearing, we fell to discussing the fact that I always insist on having long jackets to my costumes, which is evidently all right because I'm tall. But women of medium height should have medium-length jackets and short women should have shorter coats.

Another piece of information I gleaned from him was that if your costume is made of checked material, the checks should be in line right across the front and back, carrying on to the sleeves. Actually it takes about an extra three-quarters of a yard of material to permit this, but to have checks all in alignment is the sign of a good suit.

If your figure is not all it might be in a tailormade, you can do a lot to improve it by being careful about the blouse or jumper you wear. A light coloured blouse is definitely fattening; a dark one slimming.

★ Suppose you have a pale coloured suit, your hips will appear larger in comparison if you wear a darker jumper. Should you be too slight in the bust but of average hip measurement, wear a dark skirt and a light blouse and you will appear in far better proportion.

The tailor was very determined that the wearing of a petticoat prolongs the life of the skirt. It does a great deal to prevent that awful bagginess in the seat, which is death to the smartness of any suit.

FAREWELL FIFTH AVENUE!

A girl sitting in front of me at a dress show the other day had invented a most attractive colour scheme. She had a nigger-brown belted coat, nigger brown hat, shoes and gloves and (rather surprising, but awfully effective) a deep hyacinth-blue scarf knotted at her neck, a matching ribbon round her hat and a handbag of exactly the same colour.

If anyone had told me, as I'm telling you, that these colours went so well together, I'd have doubted her, but they really do look most attractive.

Try the effect of a new belt in that soft shade of rather dark bluebells on your last year's nigger-brown dress, which you were almost going to give to the deserving poor.

Replace the brown ribbon round your old brown felt and give it a fresh, new blue one and you'll be as pleased as I am, for I've done it myself!

Maybe, you've a jumper of just that shade of blue and a brown skirt. What about wearing the two together for a change?

★ Despite my recklessness in trying all sorts of strange, tempting rich dishes such as tremendous piles of whipped cream balanced perilously on chocolate cake and other temptations of the devil, I am not having to pay the penalty I probably deserve.

For when my skin suddenly became rather bumpy, caused I suppose by acidity in the skin, which I knew to be the result of eating too much rich food, I searched among the many creams I brought over with me, just in case this sort of thing happened.

And I found two that would fit the bill, for they were specially prepared for acid skin by experts. Beauty specialists have long known that just as milk of magnesia counteracts internal acidity, so does it soothe away acidity of the skin and correct the blemishes we all hate so much. This ingredient is now incorporated in these two new-type creams possessing a beauty-giving action you've never known before. I found they worked wonders. In a few days there were no more bumps under my skin and I was still trying all the new dishes I could find.

You can try these new creams for yourself, for I made arrangements for generous samples of each to be sent to you on receipt of 6d. The first brings you the corrective, beautifying and refining action of milk of magnesia in a milky-white, greaseless cream that soothes away roughness, corrects oiliness and prepares your skin for make-up and powder.

All the harsh, beauty-destroying effects of acid secretions are soothed away, freeing your skin of blemishes and making it velvety smooth.

The other cream, which is one for cleansing, liquefies the moment it touches your skin. It seeps right into the pores, and the milk of magnesia in it not only removes acid waste, but also gathers up all impurities in an emulsion that is easily wiped off. So you see these two creams used together really free the skin from acid.

★ I have often read, in American stories, of people eating cinnamon toast, but I've never seen a recipe for it in any cookery book. Well, one of my first thoughts at tea-time on my first day here was "cinnamon toast." So I asked for it, tasted it, liked and asked for the recipe, and here it is.

Toast the bread on one side only. Then spread the untoasted side with butter and toast rather lightly. On this side sprinkle a mixture made up of cinnamon and castor sugar, and then toast it again until the cinnamon and sugar melt and bubble up a little. Serve straight from the toaster, for it must be eaten piping hot.

★ Evening head-dresses are still "the tops." It seems that you can stick almost anything on your head in the evening and it will be quite all right. I only hope the day of balancing ships in full sail in our hair, is not coming back. I just couldn't stand that.

Still, there are other fashions that are almost as bad. I have seen large evening veils completely enveloping the wearer and sewn on the veil, coinciding with eyebrows, or lips, were sequins. Personally I think they're hideous, but there you are, they're the so-called height of fashion, I suppose.

Much more attractive are the feather or sequin birds. Flowers, too, are made of sequins, which are tremendously fashionable as a trimming, and look charming as they shine and twinkle among your curls.

Simple bows look pretty, too. The other evening I saw a blonde whose hair had been done in a halo roll and through the roll had been threaded a piece of bright sapphire blue ribbon, which matched her eyes and her dress, the two ends being tied in a perky little bow on top of her head. The effect was charming.

The same evening I saw a girl, who had almost black hair, with a large spider made of brilliants, sitting on her waves. Quite attractive, but, also, a bit creepy.

Meanwhile, Farewell, Fifth Avenue.

If you are interested in any of the things mentioned in this page please write to Virginia Hall, c/o "The Passing Show," 92 Long Acre, W.C.2, for she is very willing to help in such matters

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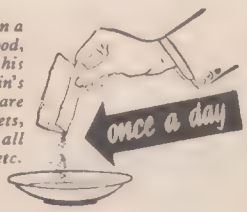

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Continuing

10 TEACUPS

by

CARTER DICKSON

ILLUSTRATED BY JACK M. FAULKS

WHO WILL BE NEXT?

"No you don't, son," said H.M. sharply. His big hand descended on Masters' arm as the chief inspector drew out a police whistle

There will be ten teacups at No. 5b Lancaster Mews, W.1, on Thursday, August 1, at 9.30 p.m. precisely. Sir Henry Merrivale is invited to attend at a demonstration with any guests he may choose to bring. Another invitation such as this, sent to Chief-Inspector Humphrey Masters, a few days previously, led the police into the middle of a most baffling murder mystery. Even while they were guarding the house to which Masters had been invited, Vance Keating, wealthy young adventurer, was shot dead in an attic that contained a table bearing ten teacups.

Taking their problem to Sir Henry Merrivale, the great detective, Masters and his assistant, Sergeant Pollard, are surprised by the paucity of evidence they have to offer. They know that a cigarette case found by the body, was owned by Mrs. Jeremy Derwent, wife of a solicitor to a man named Dartley, who was shot in similar circumstances two years previously. But as soon as they learned that Keating left all his money to Mrs. D erwent, they also found she had a perfect a libi.

They heard that Keating failed to attend a "murder" party given by the Derwents the night before the murder. Frances Gale said this was because Keating and his best friend, Ron Gardner, had quarrelled over her. Philip Keating, cousin of the dead man, says he saw Vance firing a .45 revolver at Gardner.

Later this revolver, which was owned by Gardner, was "stolen" from the murder party and found beside the dead man, but even Benjamin Soar, antique dealer, who was also at the party, cannot explain how the gun was smuggled out of the house.

★

TOWARDS seven o'clock that evening, when Pollard climbed aboard a bus to join H. M. and Masters for dinner at H. M.'s favourite tavern, the "Green Man" near St. Bride's Church behind Fleet Street, the town was still a blur of rain. It fell solidly, without fuss and without any slackening, as it had been falling for some hours. Sergeant Pollard, soaked, pulled himself up the steps to the top deck of the bus, got himself into a corner and studied his notes.

There was a certain piece of evidence he had read twice already. But he meant to read it again as often as should be necessary until he understood H. M.'s comment on it—for H. M. had declared, with some fervency, that it contained several points indicating the solution of the problem. It was not sensational. It was an account of Vance Keating's movements from Tuesday morning until Wednesday afternoon; and, though there were suggestive points in it, Pollard could not find anything like a foreshadowing of the solution.

It was headed *Testimony of Alfred Edward Bartlett, valet*. Pollard thought of Bartlett, as H. M. and Masters had questioned him at Lincoln Mansions early that afternoon. Alfred Edward was a lean, grizzled, elderly man with a lean and crooked nose, but with a calm and positive manner. He did not, according to the tradition of valets after murders, look shifty; he looked capable and reliable. The first part of his statement, taken with that of W. G. Hawkins, was merely a verification of Gardner's story about the collar-pin device for the Murder party. Bartlett stood easily, his strong white hands folded, and never raised his voice. Pollard picked up the thread of the questionings:

Q (*by Masters*): Finally, you tell us that when Mr. Keating's arm hit the lamp-standard, the gun went off and the wadding from the blank cartridge broke the glass on the tray you were carrying?

A: Yes. It hit the glass not an inch above my hand. That was why I dropped the tray on the table.

Q: How far was Mr. Keating away from you then?

A: About as far as I am from you now. (Six feet? Seven feet?)

Q: From where you were standing, could you see the door to the hall?

A: Yes, I could have seen it, but I was not looking at it.

Q: So you did not see Mr. Philip Keating there?

A: No.

Q: What did Mr. Vance Keating and Mr. Gardner do after this?

A: They had dinner. Then they started drinking and talking.

Q: Did they drink a lot?

A: Yes, a fairish amount.

Q: Were you in the room at this time?

A: Yes, they made me stay up and drink with them. I used to be a barman and I can mix any drink in the world.

Q: Did Mr. Keating say anything about the Ten Teacups, or about an appointment for Wednesday?

A: No, I am sure he did not, or I would have noticed it.

Q: Did he say anything about any other people in their group: I mean, anything that would help us to find out who killed him?

A: Not anything particular that I remember. He talked about them, but nothing particular.

Q: Did he seem to be on good terms with all of them?

A: Yes, very good terms. Oh, once he wanted to ring up Mrs. Derwent on the telephone and talk to her, but it was half-past one in the morning and we stopped him.

Q: Did he talk much about Mrs. Derwent?

A: Nothing more than usual.

Q: Come, now, none of that! What did he say about Mrs. Derwent?

A: He said he was going to make the bitch come across if it was the last thing he ever did in the world.

Q: What did Mr. Gardner say to that?

A: Mr. Gardner said it was all right now, but he would have to stop playing about after he was married. Mr. Keating said: That's right, that's right, and they shook hands five or six times and had another drink on it.

Q: But mightn't he have said something you didn't overhear?

A: I do not think so, because I was with them until Mr. Gardner left. Mr. Gardner insisted on walking downstairs instead of going by the lift. They are those curved stairs that none of the drunken gentlemen can resist walking down. Mr. Keating said he would go along. I went along too, because I did not know whether they could manage it and I was afraid they might start singing in the halls.

Q: Now, about the next morning. Tuesday morning. I want to hear about every visitor, 'phone-call, or letter he had. Was there any mail that morning?

A: No.

Q: What time did Mr. Keating get up?

A: About ten o'clock. That is, he woke up about ten o'clock, but he did not get up until nearly one. He stayed in bed with a wet towel on his head, groaning. Mr. Derwent came to the flat to see him.

Q: What time did Mr. Derwent get here?

A: I think it was a little past eleven in the morning.

Q: Was it usual for Mr. Derwent to come to the flat?

A: No, it was the first time he had ever been.

Q: What did they talk about?

A: I don't know. Mr. Derwent went into the bedroom to see him and the door was closed.

Q: Did you overhear anything?

A: Not a word.

Q: But did it seem a friendly sort of interview?

A: Well, yes, as far as I could judge. Mr. Derwent certainly seemed all right when he left.

Q: What about Mr. Keating?

A: Yes, he seemed cheerful enough.

Q: Did Mr. Derwent say anything that you overheard as he was going?

A: Yes, he looked over his shoulder and said something to Mr. Keating in French. I think it was French. I do not understand French. Mr. Keating said something back in the same language.

Q: Did Mr. Keating have any other callers?

A: No, not all day. About half-past two, I think it was, Mr. Soar rang up about a gold shawl or something.

Pollard here noticed the witness completely verified Soar's story, as far as it could be verified by one listening to only one side of the conversation. Bartlett agreed that his employer had never ordered any such article from Soar, and had certainly not put through any call to Soar at one o'clock. It was a strong point in the art-dealer's favour.

Q: Did Mr. Keating make any comment to you about this?

A: No.

Q: But how did he seem? Angry? Upset?

A: Yes, rather angry.

Q: What happened then?

A: He had a Turkish bath at the flat. There is a steam cabinet fixed up in the bathroom. That was when I first heard he was not going to the Murder party at Mr. Derwent's that night. I asked whether he would dress formally or informally. He said never mind which, because he was not going.

Q (*by H. M.*): Didn't that surprise you?

A: Very much.

Q: Why did you think he had changed his mind all of a sudden?

A: I supposed it was because of the difficulty with Mr. Soar about the shawl.

Q: Did that sound reasonable to you? If anybody played a hoax on him by ordering the shawl in his name and having Mr. Soar send it to Mrs. Derwent in his name, wouldn't he be more likely to go to Mrs. Derwent and find out what it was all about?

A: I do not know. That was none of my business. If you do your job well, you do not think about anything your employer does and then you do not get into trouble.

Q (*by Masters again*): Were there any other messages that day?

A: Miss Gale rang up late in the afternoon, about five. I do not know what they talked about. I was mixing an after-Turkish-bath cocktail in the kitchen, and Mr. Keating answered the 'phone.

Q: How did he spend the evening?

A: At home. He sent me out to buy half a dozen detective novels and he spent the evening reading and listening to the wireless.

Q: Was he usually as home-loving as that?

A: No, but he did it sometimes.

Q: Finally, about Wednesday—the day he was killed . . .

A: I was coming to that. Wednesday morning he received a letter that seemed to excite him a good deal.

Q: Did you see the letter?

A: Naturally not, but there were two keys in it. One looked like a front-door key and the other just an ordinary door-key.

Q: You think they were the keys to 4, Berwick Terrace?

A: I suppose so now. That is none of my business. You asked me.

Q: What did he do?

A: He fidgeted about all morning, and at noon he said he had got to go out. Just as he was going out——

Q: Wait. Look at this hat; grey Homburg, size 7¾, with the name "Philip Keating" inside. When he left the flat on Wednesday, was he wearing this hat?

A: No, he was not. It is not his hat.

Q: What hat was he wearing then?

A: None at all. He seldom wore a hat in the hot weather.

Here, Pollard remembered, a wrangle had taken place. They had been questioning Bartlett in the living-room of Philip's flat, with all other witnesses excluded. But Philip himself was brought in to hear this part of it. Inquiries all over the building brought the hall-porter of the flats into the discussion; the hall-porter declaring that, when Vance Keating had come downstairs in the lift about noon on Wednesday, he had been wearing a grey hat. Nevertheless, Bartlett was not to be shaken in his positive declaration as to Keating's having left the flat bareheaded.

Q: Could he have picked up the hat somewhere between the time he left his own flat and the time he went downstairs in the lift?

A: He might have done, but I don't know anything about that. All I say is that he did not have a hat when he left me. Anybody who says he did is not telling the truth.

Q: Could he have picked it up here at Mr. Philip Keating's?

Philip Keating: No, he could not. I tell you again, I never saw that God damned hat in my life.

Q: Were you in your flat at noon on Wednesday.

Philip Keating: No, I was at my office like any decent working man.

When Philip was got rid of, with as little fuss as possible, the examination of Bartlett was concluded:

Q: Now, we have evidence that Mr. Keating went to Berwick Terrace early on Wednesday afternoon; that he left there at ten minutes past two; that he took a cab and returned to his flat for a very brief visit about three o'clock. Why did he come back to his flat?

A: I don't know. He was like that.

Q: What do you mean, he was like that?

A: I mean he would always dash in and dash out.

Q: What did he do when he came back here?

A: He went into the bedroom and closed the door and came out again, in a couple of seconds. I do not know what he did there.

Q: Was he wearing the famous hat then?

A: Yes, he was. It was not what you could call becoming and Mr. Gardner said: "Where did you get the funny-looking tile?"

Q: Mr. Gardner? He was there?

A: Yes, he came in some time before to find out why Mr. Keating had not been at the Murder party and he waited.

Q: What did Mr. Keating say about the hat?

A: It was something foolish. I am not certain about it.

Q: Yes, but what was it?

A: He said the hat had magical powers. He said he had to go out again; but he told Mr. Gardner to wait there until he came back and he would have some great news. Then out he went again.

Q: Did Mr. Gardner wait?

A: He waited until about twenty minutes to five and then he got mad and left.

Q: Did anything else happen while Mr. Keating was at the flat?

A: No, he was there only a few minutes. Oh, Mr. Philip Keating rang up, but Mr. Keating said he did not have time to talk to him. They had a slight argument and swore at each other a bit; but that was nothing unusual.

Q: Why did they swear at each other?

(*please turn over*)

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Continuing Ten Teacups — *by* Carter Dickson

A: I think Mr. Philip Keating was trying to borrow some money. He had already rung up once before, in the morning.

Q: Can you explain how an ordinary fifteen and sixpenny hat from Prance and Sons could have magical powers?

A: I do not think it has magical powers. I am only telling you what Mr. Keating said, and that is different.

Considerably different, Pollard thought as he closed up the notes in some disgust and stared out at the eternal twilight of the rain. The bus itself, lumbering down the slope into Fleet Street, seemed to be hooting at him. There was still the problem of Keating's sudden refusal to attend the Murder party. There was still the problem of Nobody's Hat. Not even a helpful quarrel had been recorded. The one lead towards an alibi—among the few suggestive points as Pollard saw it—proved little except doubt. Pollard had established, by corroboration of the hall-porter, that Ronald Gardner really had left the flat on Wednesday afternoon at about twenty minutes to five. It would therefore require almost superhuman speed for him to have got out to Berwick Terrace in time to kill Keating at five. But, granted phenomenal luck with successive Underground trains, it was just possible; and none of the suspects could definitely be eliminated.

Nor was the sergeant alone in his state of mind. Arriving at the "Green Man," where H. M. and Masters were installed in a snug room upstairs, he found Masters raving.

"So there'll be ten teacups, will there, at number 5b, Lancaster Mews?" said the chief inspector. "And they'll be there to-night, will they? To-night? Does this maniac think he can get away with it twice on successive days?"

H. M., who had been studying a menu, put it down and peered up at him over his glasses. H. M. looked sombre; he spoke in a worried growl.

"Don't go so fast; that's all I ask. I say, Masters, have you made sure this new teacup letter is strictly on the level?"

The chief inspector mopped his forehead. "So help me, sir, I don't know what to make of you! You don't seem like yourself. You don't seem to want to ask any questions, or take any interest—yes, it seems to be on the level as far as these murders are on the level. I found that out, while you took your siesta this afternoon. And I've got a bit of a feeling that something pretty terrific is going to happen to-night: I haven't had the feeling quite so bad since the War."

The dingy-panelled little dining-room, with its gas-lights and eighteenth-century pewter, was very warm. Even the rain, dripping thick and sluggish outside the windows, looked warm.

"Yes. I know," said H. M. "What about the house?"

"5b, Lancaster Mews is in a poky little, but rather swank, street—all in a huddle, as it were—at the back of Park Lane. You know the sort of thing; what used to be the stables and coach-houses of the big mansions turned into private residences. The house has been empty for some time. It belongs to Lord Heyling. Lord Heyling is out of town and we couldn't get hold of anybody belonging to him. Doesn't matter, though. I've got a search warrant; we can break in any time we like."

"Empty!" said H.M., violently. "You're not goin' to tell me that the usual load of furniture arrived there to-day?"

"It did. And nobody knows the name of the hauling company. Just so, sir; if you tell me it's getting a bit creepy, I'll agree with you. But why should it surprise you?"

There was a silence, while the waiter brought soup. H. M. opened and shut his big hand on the table. He said:

"Because there's no point to it, that's why! There's no point to it at all, unless my whole glimmer of reason about this case turns black and I have to start all over again. Which, you'll say, is extremely probable. Wait, now; don't hustle me, dammit! What have you done to prevent another dance of the teacups?"

"The house is watched."

"Uh-huh. I seem to remember you did that before."

Masters glared. "Oh, ah; but we've learned a thing or two about the customer we're dealing with. And will you just tell me what other precautions you can take against a murderer who seems to be invisible? Very well. Every bolt-hole is stopped. I'm getting half-hourly reports from our men there. Nobody has been near the house all day. As soon as anyone so much as sticks his nose inside the door, we're ready to close in at any time we like. But that's not all. We're not working blind now. We know our circle of suspects. Every person under suspicion in this case has been shadowed since that letter came this morning. They won't be able to draw a breath, any of 'em, that we don't know about . . ."

"That's better, son. That's somethin' like it."

"Our own crowd is on the job. As soon as I hear of anybody inside," he looked at Pollard, "you and I are moving in——"

"Well . . . now," said H. M., scratching the side of his jaw, "I expect I'll be taggin' along myself."

"There may be funny business, and there may be more than one of 'em. I wish we could be armed, but, of course, the Home Office won't allow that. When trouble breaks loose, the English copper has got to use his hands and trust in God. Ur!" said Masters, more relieved now that he knew his ground. "I don't expect that real trouble will break loose before half-past nine, just as it says in the letter. This—this teacup maniac seems to be very neat and precise about doing his work to schedule. But we're ready for him at any time. That's what I can't understand. This chap must know we're ready. How the blazes does he think he can get away with it again?"

It was noteworthy that none of them ate much soup. They had other interests.

"It still looks fishy!" roared H. M., paddling with his spoon. "Look here: did you compare that letter this morning with the other teacup letters, to see if they were written on the same typewriter?"

"Doesn't mean a thing, I'm afraid, sir. I think I've told you before; of all the documents of any kind in this business, no two of 'em were written on the same typewriter."

"Meanin' that there may be an organisation?"

"Just as you like, sir. While you were sleeping this afternoon—or sitting and thinking if you prefer it—I've got together a few more bits of information. Which reminds me." He turned to Pollard. "Let's hear what you've got to say, Bob. I may tell you, sir, that I sent the sergeant out to Kensington to interview Mrs. Derwent. I thought he might be a bit better at polite give-and-take than an old-style copper like me."

H. M. looked round curiously and Pollard shook his head.

"No good in that," Pollard said. "I didn't even see her."

"Didn't even see her?" snapped Masters.

"No, sir. She's got two doctors and a nurse in the house. I asked the doctors whether they were going to certify her. They said she was prostrated with complete nervous shock and could see nobody. They were within their rights and they knew it. I saw the maid, though—the one who received the gold cloth from Soar's assistant on Tuesday afternoon. The maid is willing to swear she gave the parcel to Mrs. Derwent. Mrs. Derwent was then in an upstairs sitting-room. *And there was somebody with her.*"

"Who?"

"Exactly. The maid doesn't know. She didn't know there was anybody in the house at all until she heard Mrs. Derwent talking behind a closed door. The maid hadn't seen anybody come into the house, or anybody leave it. Mrs. Derwent opened the sitting-room door, took the parcel and shut the door again. And that's all," said Pollard, remembering the dreary house in the gardens. "Mrs. Derwent sent me a message, though. She said she was sorry to be too ill to see me and she thought I ought to have some refreshment, after my long trip for nothing; so how would I like a nice hot cup of tea?"

H. M. laid down his spoon.

"Smart cracks again, hey?" he demanded.

"You ought to have expected that," Masters said gloomily. "It's exactly the answer she would have sent. Now *I'll* tell you something. First, you can discard all our fancy ideas about people hiding in divans or guns hidden in gas-pipes. Inspector Cotteril has almost torn that attic room to pieces at Berwick Terrace. As for that brown divan—the one Miss Gale said had a hollow place inside it—the hollow place is just about flat. It wouldn't hold anything bigger than a picture post-card. Lummy, I wonder why a sensible girl like Miss Gale bothered us with that at all!" He brooded. "As for the gas-pipe, it's an ordinary gas-pipe. Nothing else. No flummeries in the room. No secret passages. No gun-mechanism. No mechanical device. . . .

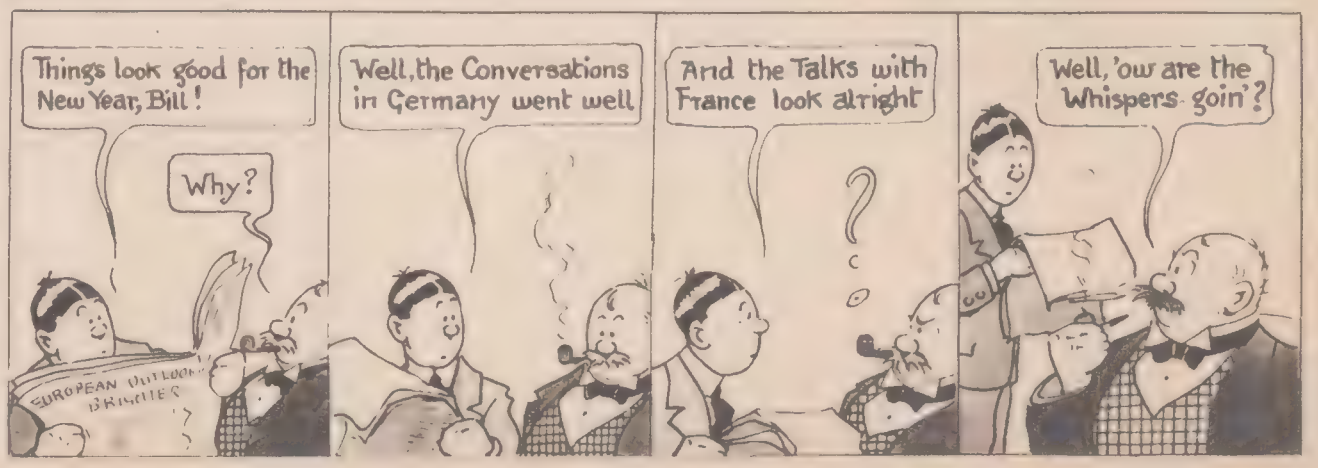
"That's the first point. The second point is this: we needn't suspect Mr. Jeremy Derwent any longer. He's definitely out of it. He's got a cast-iron alibi."

"Then Soar was right," mumbled H. M., "when he said that at five o'clock on the afternoon of Keating's murder Jem Derwent was sittin' in the office of the Commissioner of Police?"

Masters smiled without amusement.

(*please turn to page* 28)

OLD BILL & BERT — by BRUCE BAIRNSFATHER



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Continuing Ten Teacups *by* Carter Dickson

"He was even right to a shade. He didn't say 'office.' He said 'offices.' Mr. Derwent wasn't actually with the Commissioner, but he was in an outer office trying to see him; and there's no doubt about that. It's one of the few instances I know of where Scotland Yard itself can swear to a suspect's innocence. As a suspect he is O-U-T, out; and at least it clears the air."

He sat back as the waiter brought them the second course which they were never to eat and the waiter bent over Masters.

"Message for you downstairs," he said.

They all knew what it was. H. M. took out his watch, which ticked loudly as its hands pointed to a quarter past eight. Masters was not long away from the table; when he returned he was calm and almost genial.

"Get ready, sir," he said. "The car's waiting. A man has just gone into 5b, Lancaster Mews."

It was not possible to see far ahead. A narrow, cobble-stoned lane ran to the north. To the right of the lane were high walls, like warehouse walls. To the left stood cramped houses hanging over it, all as dark as though they remained stables and coach-houses. About halfway down the lane on the right, a narrower alley pierced it at right-angles and stretched away to a dead wall. The squat, two-storeyed house at the corner of the lane and the alley—with a door fronting on each—was number 5b, Lancaster Mews.

Some dozen yards away from this corner there was a street-lamp, which the wash of rain blurred to a mere spark of gas. Its glass box streamed; its spark was distorted by the downpour; it made faint images waver and change. If you got close enough to 5b, you could make out that the front door (with an iron knocker) gave on the lane; the side door on the alley. Not a hundred yards away was the life of Park Lane; this was one of those semi-detached mazes, which seem more dingy than a slum. A dozen eyes watched the house, but no movement could have been heard under the multitudinous noises of the rain. In some places it fell with a flat smack, in others with a drizzle, in others with a steady splashing; but always sluggish and like nothing so much as warm tea.

Masters kept to the left-hand wall of the lane, with Pollard behind him and H. M. following. Pollard could barely see the shape of the chief inspector's back ahead of him; he almost bumped into Masters when the latter stopped. There was a bare alteration in the darkness, but a new voice whispered:

"All present and correct, sir," "There are three of 'em inside now."

"Three?"

"Yes. Looks like a meeting, all right. The first one came when I got in touch with you, fifteen minutes ago——"

"Did you get a good look at him?"

"Not at his face. Not much of anything. He had on a big mackintosh and a soft hat; his head was down, naturally. He opened the front door with a key, and ducked in. I don't know whether he put a light on inside. You can't tell from here. The second man——"

"S-sst!" urged Masters softly, and Pollard thought that he held up his hand. The monotonous drip-and-splash was louder than their voices. "I thought I heard something. No, it's all right; go on."

"—the second man got here only a minute or so after the first one. Another mackintosh. He tried the front door and poked round the windows and then he went to the side door, in that alley. I don't know whether he opened it with a key; I think so; but he opened it. The third man arrived only a little before you did; wore some sort of box-pleated cape and a soft hat. *He* was let in by someone who opened the front door—still without a glimmer showing in the whole house. They're up to no good, sir, I can tell you that."

"How many ways in or out?"

"Only those two doors. All the windows are covered. I've got a skeleton key that'll fit the side door. Here, you'd better take it."

"Right. Stand by until . . . *Goddelmighty, what's the old fool up to?*" Masters, spinning round in the dark, had almost spoken the words in an audible voice. Somebody brushed past Pollard in the dark. H. M. lumbered out slowly, a dim bulk against the spark of the street-lamp, and was walking across towards the front door of number 5b. Over the crown of his ancient top-hat (the present from Queen Victoria) he had laid a large handkerchief to protect it from the weather; and the draped effect was somewhat weird in silhouette. He trudged steadily, the handkerchief swinging. He stopped before the door of the house. He examined it. Then H. M. lifted the iron knocker, and it banged thunderously in Lancaster Mews.

Touching Pollard's arm for him to follow, Masters hurried across to the house. There was no reply to the knocking, except its own echoes and the rain. Nothing stirred in the house. The three of them stood in a row, facing the door and Masters spoke in a blurred, ventriloquial mutter.

"Are you clear off your chump?" inquired the chief inspector. "Do you want 'em to get ready for us? What's the game?"

"I had an idea," H. M. explained in the same tone.

"Just so. Was your idea right?"

"No, it was wrong," said H. M. He added: "Don't move and don't look up. There's a window just above the door; and there's somebody's hand with a gun in it; and I rather think it's trained straight at the middle of your forehead."

None of the three moved a muscle. Pollard heard the rain beating on him and saw trickles of it past his eyes, while they stood looking at the door. After a silence Masters joggled his arm, slipping a piece of cold metal into his hand.

"Skeleton key to the side door," said Masters. "Walk back there, get Sugden and Wright and go into the alley. Send Banks to me. Don't hurry. When you hear me whistle, rush the side door. Banks and I will break in this one and take him from this side. You, sir, move back against the wall when you hear the signal . . ."

"Why waste good men?" said H. M. "Follow the old man, son."

He turned round, settling his shoulders, and waddled away from the door with a sour expression. There was nothing to do but follow him; two seconds of unhurried walking and the three of them were in the pitch-dark alley, with no bullet fired. As Pollard turned away from the door, he cocked one eye up at the window. Behind the pane he could see nothing but a grimy white-gloved hand, which suddenly appeared and flattened itself out against the pane like a starfish.

Swollen gutters ran in the alley, where they took conference. "Do we," Masters muttered, "do we go in, or don't we?"

"We go in," said H. M., "but by a door where we got a reasonable chance. Have I tipped the beans all over the floor? I dunno. I didn't think there was goin' to be dirty work. Now I know there is. Try this door, son."

Pollard groped after it, a thinner door with peeling paint that might once have been grey. His finger was searching for the keyhole, when he heard a faint click and the knob moved in his hand. He knew what had happened even before he put the skeleton key into the lock.

"They've opened the door for us from the inside, sir," he said. "Have you got a flashlight?"

Masters snapped on a torch, and, as Pollard pushed the door open with his foot, Masters flourished the beam of the torch inside like a broom. Straight ahead ran a spacious passage with a low roof. It was not altogether dark; some faint illumination came from behind a door at the far end, standing a few inches open. They could see that the passage was carpeted with thick coconut matting, of a dull yellowish colour. In the wall, on either side, there was a large niche, such as used to be found along the staircases of old-fashioned houses. In each niche stood a porcelain jar, or vase, with a curious top. Pollard thought of Masters's description of one set of teacups, "orange and yellow and blue, shiny-like, and it seemed to move."

Masters went swiftly down the passage, but he stopped half-way along it, and directed his light down. There were no water-stains or footmarks in the place, except one or two near the door, but half-way along, two feet or more from the right-hand wall, there was a small darkish spot on the matting. The chief inspector touched it and held up his finger to show that it was blood. He found another and smaller spot near the door at the end of the passage.

"All right," Masters said under his breath and pushed the door open.

The room beyond was large and also low of ceiling. A table lamp burned between two embrasured windows at the rear, without greatly disturbing the darkness. The walls were of light brown eighteenth-century wood, cracked in places, with a number of book-shelves, and over the mantelpiece hung a portrait of a more modern old man in eye-glasses. But first of all you noticed the big chairs and divans shrouded in their close-fitting white dust-covers—for the room looked raw and disarranged, like the dust-covers.

Then they smelled the smoke of a cigar.

"Good evening, gentlemen," said Mr. Jeremy Derwent, getting up from a chair whose back had been turned towards the door. "I have been expecting you. Please come in."

For the space of possibly five seconds they stared at him, listening to the water drip off their raincoats on the floor. The elderly solicitor looked as lean and brushed as he had looked last night; his wiry white side-hair was brushed close to his bald skull; and under frosty eyebrows a pair of very sharp eyes regarded them amusedly. Again he wore a dinner-jacket. In one hand he held a cigar and in the other a book, with his finger between the pages. He was very much at home in the raw, unused room.

"Who——?" blurted Masters.

"Evenin', Jem," said H. M., in his most wooden tone. "I don't think you two have met. This is Chief Inspector Masters' and that's our notorious friend, Derwent."

Derwent acknowledged this with his usual slightly pedantic style of speech.

"Ah, I am glad you have brought the police," he went on. "I told you last night, Henry, how much I regretted that we could not sit down and discuss crime comfortably over a cigar and a glass of port. And I thought the oversight had better be rectified. By the way, I have been glancing over," he held up the book, "De Quincey's, *On Murder, Considered as one of the Fine Arts*. It is magnificent writing, of course, but I fear it contains few hints for the practical modern craftsman."

Masters wiped a wet sleeve across a wet face.

"I WILL have some sense out of this," said Masters. "Don't you think, Mr. Derwent, that you've got a devil of a lot of nerve?"

"Yes, I am afraid I have," admitted the other, considering this.

"Do you know that this house is surrounded?"

"Yes. I noticed that."

In his calmness, as Pollard had noticed last night, there was again something a trifle sinister. Masters dragged out the latest teacup-note from under his waterproof.

"Well, then—did you write this?"

"Let me see it, please. Yes, that is the one I wrote. But why not take off your coats and sit down, gentlemen? It is a nasty night, and——"

"Easy, Masters," growled H. M., putting his hand on the chief inspector's sleeve. "I warn you, Jem, you better speak up and do a lot of explainin' before the rest of us get apoplexy. We've been takin' these teacup letters at their word, because this feller always keeps his word. Is there going to be a meeting of the Ten Teacups to-night? And, above all, are you the President, or Grand Llama, or whatnot of the teacups?"

Derwent put down the book in the chair.

"First of all, I can solemnly assure you that I am not in any way connected with any society of teacups. Next, there will be no meeting of a society here, or anywhere else, to-night or any other time and for a very good reason. There is no such thing."

"*No such thing?*" said Masters.

(*please turn to page* 30)

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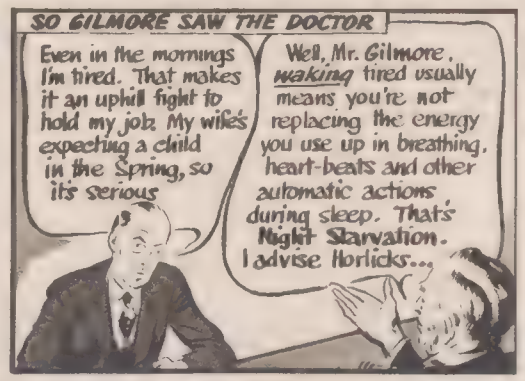

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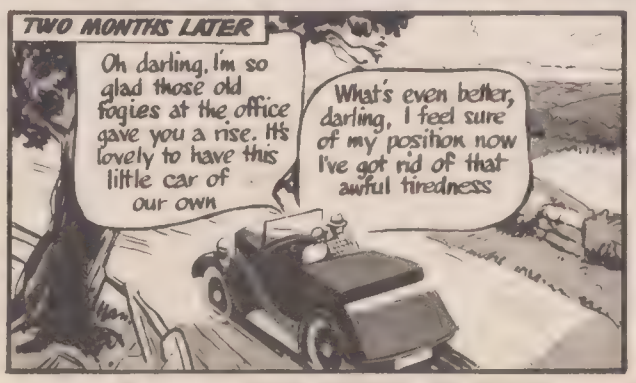

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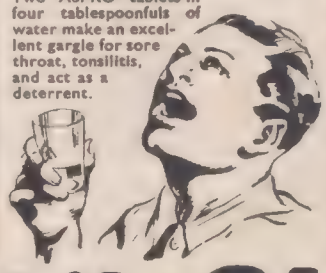

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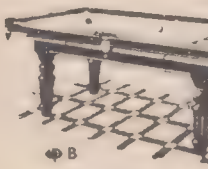

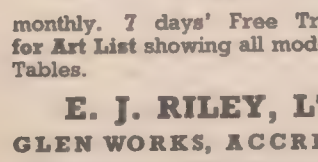

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Continuing Ten Teacups — *by* Carter Dickson

"I mean that it does not exist. . . . Gentlemen, forgive my little hoax. I wrote that letter, which is a sham and a delusion. But I want to show you that I had reason for writing it. It was the only way I could get this house watched, without a great deal of preliminary fuss and argument. It was the only way I could get you here quickly, equipped with a search-warrant, without a great deal of fuss and argument. Quickness was necessary and also an effect on a certain person's nerves. I have been trying to make Scotland Yard move for many weeks: I have learned that only a sharp jab with a pin will make justice stir at all. Justice may not be blind, like a goddess, but it has flat feet, like a policeman."

"If you've brought us here on a wild-goose chase," snapped Masters, "then I warn you——"

"Oh, no," said Derwent, rather sharply and raised his cigar. "I may not be able to show you any teacups, gentlemen, but I can show you the evidence in the murder of William Dartley."

From the direction of the interior of the house they heard footsteps. A door, giving on the interior of the house, opened and Benjamin Soar came in.

In this case there had been several encounters which produced startling results. But Pollard would never have imagined that the stocky, the swarthy, the quiet Mr. Soar could have been given such a turn. For a second there peeped out of his expression something that you might have called atavistic; certainly dangerous and from no shaven civilisation. It was gone very quickly. Soar touched the bridge of his nose, as though to assure himself that his eye-glasses were firm. He was wearing a heavy black dressing-gown.

"Hello!" he said, rather huskily. "How did you people get here? What are you doing here?"

"That, sir, is what we should like to know ourselves," replied Masters, with a certain grimness. "We thought we should find ten teacups and maybe a corpse——"

"Did you let them in, Derwent?" inquired Soar.

"I did."

"—and now we're told that it was a sort of hoax," said Masters. "But I'll tell you this; we have had and do have, very good reason to believe it's the real thing. This house, for instance. It doesn't belong to anybody and a vanload of furniture was delivered here just as it was when Mr. Dartley and Mr. Keating were mur——"

"What do you mean, it doesn't belong to anybody?" demanded Soar. "Damn you, sir, this is *my* house; bought and paid for. And of course a vanload of furniture was delivered here. Didn't I tell you myself this morning, that I was moving house and that's why I didn't have an alibi at the time of Keating's murder?"

There was a silence, except for the rain.

"Yes, he did, Masters," said H. M., scratching his nose. "A murder-case is the last mess in the world where anybody should say I-told-you-so; but there was somethin' awful fishy about that ten-teacup letter from the start. I say, Jem, I suppose you calculated the effect of that empty-house-and-furniture on us? . . . It would seem, Masters, it would *seem*," he turned round with a dull, curious look, "that we have merely walked into a man's private house——"

"Which, we are told by the law, is his castle," said Soar. "I don't object to your presence here, but I can't say I welcome it and I've had a long day. Unless you have any pressing business I think we might say good night."

"Why, sir," Masters told him, with deceptive off-handedness, "I think we have some pressing business. If this is just a cosy private house, as you claim, then why was somebody standing at the upstairs window, not very long ago, in the dark, with a revolver in his hand?"

"You're drunk," said Soar, articulating the words distinctly through stiff jaws. "You're raving mad. Sir Henry Merrivale, do you countenance this? Derwent, will you kindly tell this lunatic that there has been nobody in this house except us two?"

Derwent, seeming to switch his thoughts back to this, looked puzzled.

"Yes, that is true—whatever else may or may not be true," Derwent declared. "Soar and I are alone here, so far as I know."

"I have been upstairs changing into my dressing-gown," Soar went on, with the same intensity, "and I can tell you *I* wasn't standing at the window in the dark, with a gun in my hand. Who else could it have been? There aren't any servants here yet. In fact, the house isn't finished. Except for this room and my bedroom at the back, the furniture is all piled into the centre of the floor. And there are light-bulbs for only two rooms, which is why it is so dark; but if you think——"

Masters held up his hand.

"Would it interest you to know, sir, that this house has been watched all evening?" he asked, and saw the sweat come out on Soar's forehead. "We happen to know that there are three persons in the house now. One of you got here at a quarter-past eight, and entered by the front door——"

"That was me," said Soar. It is conceivable that, when Benjamin Soar neglected his grammar, he had received a very nasty jolt.

"The second man got here a minute or two later and came in by the side door——"

Masters paused interrogatively, but both Derwent and Soar only looked at him.

"—with a key. The third man arrived at about half-past eight and was let in at the front door. He wore a box-pleated cape."

"Your humble servant, Inspector," said Derwent. "I affect such a cape. You will find it in the hall. And I believe Mr. Soar did let me in at the front door at half-past eight. But I know of nobody who came in by the side door." He looked round politely. "Er—perhaps Mr. Soar does?"

"No, I don't. It's rubbish. It's damned rot. If there was supposed to be anyone like that, where is he now?"

"That," Masters said, "is what I propose to find out. Because there was blood in that passage leading to the side door."

"No, you don't, son," said H. M., sharply. His big hand descended on Masters's arm as the chief inspector drew out a police whistle. "Not just yet. Not for a minute or two. We know there's an extra feller in the house; we also know he can't slip away. If he's dead, he won't get out of here. If he's alive, he can't get out of here. Once you start the search and get the hounds bayin', you'll muddle up the real reason why we came here at all to-night. And I very, very much want to know that reason. . . . Mr. Soar, you got other worries."

"Blood!" Soar was saying, in such an ordinary tone that Master's eyes narrowed. "Blood! I certainly can't explain that. And you're quite at liberty to search if you . . . I beg your pardon. What were you saying?"

"Read this," said H. M. He took the teacup-letter and thrust it into Soar's hands.

Soar read it without comment, but at the end he looked steadily at Derwent. It was understanding; it was as though these two read each other's minds. In some ways they were curiously alike, even to their dexterity in playing with words; but Soar was the emotional and Derwent the logical; or was it by any chance the other way round? In any case it became plain that Soar was keying himself up for a great effort.

"Sit down, gentlemen," he suggested, and sat down himself on the arm of a chair across the room. The dim light shone on his glasses. "Derwent," he said, "this letter is a fake. You wrote it."

"Yes. I wrote it."

"Why?"

"That's what I want to know!" interposed Masters, with some violence. He had allowed H. M. to push him into a chair, but he half rose again. "You've done a lot of talking, Mr. Derwent, but you still haven't given any good, sound, solid reason why you should have played an asinine trick that may get you into trouble and that's got the whole C.I.D. out——"

"If you will let me explain," said Derwent, with a slight gesture of a cigar that had gone out. He leaned back in his own chair. "I think I can show you that it was the only way to obtain the proof I needed."

"Proof?" Soar prompted.

"Proof of who killed William Morris Dartley, at Pendragon Gardens, on the night of Monday, April 30, 1934."

"And you think I killed him?"

"No, strangely enough, I do not," replied Derwent.

"Who did, then?"

Derwent's eyes wandered up to the portrait in oils that hung over the mantelpiece. It was that of a very old man who bore a great resemblance to Soar himself, even to the eye-glasses; but it seemed of even more savage and imaginative cast.

"I think your father killed him," Derwent said, "and I am prepared to prove it."

NEXT WEEK—The Killer Who Passed Unnoticed

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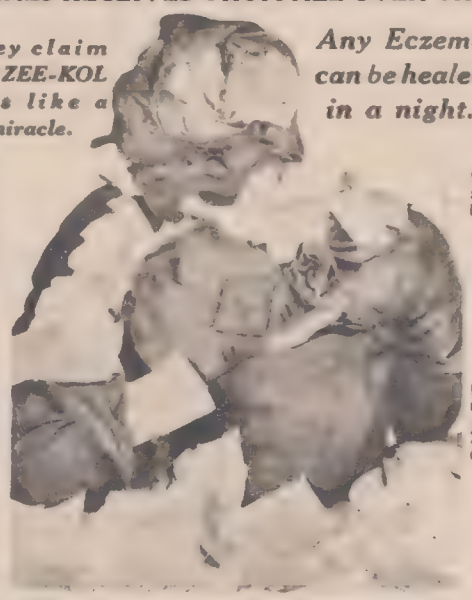

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A White Girl in the Jungle . . .

NIGHT ERRANT

by

LESLIE BERESFORD

ILLUSTRATED BY RONALD LAMPITT

BRAND'S car took the rough jungle-track from the coast-port of Sarang-dhin to So-Li in the fever-foul, mosquito and snake-infested interior, eating up mile upon mile through the night. He was in two minds as to the purpose and result of the mission which had rushed him here from the gaiety and luxury of the Club at Sarang-dhin, a few hours since.

Even when, presently, he glimpsed the distant lights which told him that Warren's rail-construction camp lay close ahead, he was uncertain, after all, what line to take. He slackened speed while thinking it out, before crisis had to be faced.

All over a letter. One of few words indeed, but with too much of meaning behind them for him to have written to Warren's wife, in that folly of infatuation which she had aroused in him. She had to be blamed a little; and so, too, had Warren for bringing her to a God-forsaken spot like Sarang-dhin and then forgetting about her for long stretches, while away building his bridges and laying his track, in the interior.

Why, again, should the strange adventure have occurred to that letter as it had done? Brand felt a grim amusement at the trend of it; but Eve—deathly pale and frightened—had seen it very differently.

The Chinese *amah* had brought it to her, she had explained, together with one just arrived from her husband, saying he was returning. Actually, as she was reading the two, Warren was with her. Quickly, for fear lest he should see it, she had slipped Brand's indiscreet epistle into the leather case containing a necklet of pearls, lying on her dressing-table at the moment. Slipped it under the blue velvet bed on which the pearls lay, the bed happening to be loose.

And what should Warren do, thinking always with that practical mind of his, but say the pearls were too precious to risk being snatched by dacoits, through lying around as they were. He had pocketed them to be deposited at the bank. Hot on this, little more than an hour later, he had been called back urgently to So-Li, because of trouble there.

Pearls still in pocket, he was gone like the wind, with Eve only gradually realising afterwards what had happened, to say nothing of its possibilities. In a frenzy of fear, she had come to Brand.

"You must go after him. Make any excuse you like, but be with him till you can get at that case. Once he sees that letter and reads it, I'm lost. That mustn't happen. It mustn't—you see? I—I love him——"

And here, in the dank swampishness of So-Li, as Brand braked his car alongside the construction-camp huts, came Warren—all grimed and sweated—wondering why he had turned up?

Brand pulled himself together, faintly relieved. So far, it was clear, Warren had nothing against him, for he was smiling and pally. And that he could scarcely have been, had he found the letter. It was easy for Brand, who was on government survey work, to frame an excuse for his arrival, with the request that he might stay the night.

Warren was dining—in the rough, it was true—but that suited Brand, who was hungry. Yet, as they talked, he had little appetite to eat. Why—he wondered—must Warren talk so confidingly about Eve; his feeling that she ought not to be at Sarang-dhin; his fears that their separation, for such long periods, was not good for their married happiness? Was he acting a part? Had he found and read that letter, and now was playing the cat-and-mouse game?

"You're luckier than I am, Brand. You see a great deal of her, I know," he observed, in the end and Brand guessed—half-hoped—that he was pointing the shaft he had prepared. Then, however, he said something which completely turned the tables :

"I'm glad of that, anyhow. You're a man after my own heart, Brand. While Eve's with you, I know she can come to no harm.

"Which reminds me." He thrust a hand into an inner breast-pocket of his jacket, then laughed : "A minute or so before you turned up, I found I'd done a queer thing. Coming back here in a hurry, I've brought Eve's pearls with me by mistake. Meant to put them in the bank at Sarang-dhin. They're in this case——"

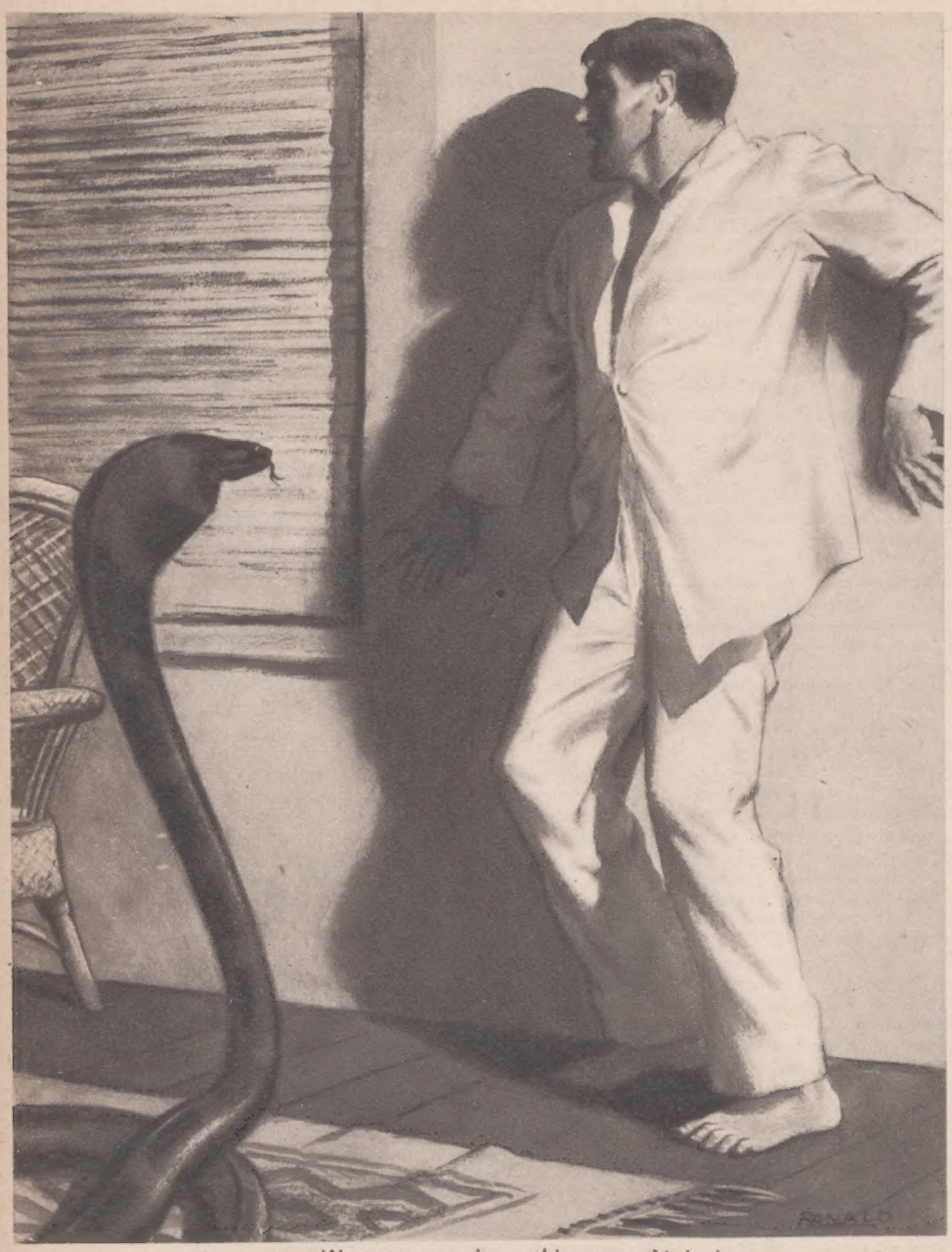
Brand's fascinated eyes stared at the oblong of shiny blue leather on the table. His heart was in his mouth because of what, he knew, lay hidden in it—beneath a loose bed of blue velvet. The fingers of Warren, toying with the gilt catch, opened the lid, so that the pearls shimmered on that blue bed.

"As beautiful as Eve . . ." he mused, for him, quite affectedly; then he closed the case, putting it back in that inner breast-pocket.

"Anyhow, they're safer with me than with Eve." He laughed lightly. "She's shockingly careless about things, as you've probably discovered by this time, Brand. Never has the least idea what she's done with them, where she's put them. One of these days, I've always told her, she'll mislay herself and get lost too."

Brand, meanwhile, had done some quick thinking. If Warren had only discovered the case on his person within a few minutes of their meeting here, it was safe enough to conclude that he could scarcely have discovered what was in it, apart from the pearls. And here was Brand's chance to seize unexpected opportunity.

"All the same, my dear fellow, is it wise to be carrying valuable pearls about in the jungle like this?" he suggested, hand outheld. "Why not let me take charge of them, put them in your bank



Warren, weaponless and impotent, his back to a wall, faced an immense king cobra

at Sarang-dhin for you when I get back there tomorrow?"

"Oh, why should I trouble you?" Warren laughed, declining the offer. "As a matter of fact, without being stupidly sentimental, having the pearls with me is the next best thing to having Eve along."

Just then came a native foreman, asking that Warren went with him over some trouble. Before leaving he explained that he might be some hours away and showed Brand where he could sleep.

Sleep? Under the mosquito-net on the bed, Brand listened to the din of the bull-frogs and cicadas, the night-life of the jungle, asking only to be kept awake. He had to get at that case, though how, he did not know. It could only be, he realised, when Warren slept, and so deftly that he never knew.

And then he found he had slept after all, being suddenly awakened by Warren's voice, calling to him in high-pitched, urgent tones:

"Brand. . . . For God's sake, come quickly. . . ."

He was on the threshold of Warren's room in a trice, having first safeguarded himself by snatching up his gun, without which he never slept in the jungle. He crashed in on Warren, eyes blinking from sleep, wondering what on earth he would find there. He stiffened in horror.

Warren, weaponless and impotent, his back to a wall, faced an immense king cobra, which seemingly he had disturbed when making for his bed in the middle of the room. Even as Brand stood there in the doorway, the cobra's head was reared high, with its inflated hood and evil glistening eyes swaying from side to side, seeking only the moment to dart forward in that fatal bite.

Brand had only to stand where he did, doing nothing, an instant longer, and all would be over. The letter in the case would matter nothing then. . . .

The shattered head of the cobra flapped to and fro on the floor before Brand quite realised that he had done the only right thing. Warren, never at any moment having shown fear, was laughing:

"Gosh, Brand. . . . It seemed to me that hours passed before you fired. A damned good shot too. Give me your fist. I owe my life to you."

He did, as Brand knew only too well. And now, being so much master of himself again, he wished it could remain at that. It couldn't. The danger of that indiscreet letter reared again its head, poisonous as a cobra's.

Even as he realised this, by the purest accident, Warren himself brought that matter to a head. As he talked, actually emotional in his gratitude, he was pouring out a couple of stiff whisky-pegs for them both at a table. Then he lifted up his jacket, seeking for a cigarette-case, suggesting that a smoke would steady their nerves.

And here, before Brand's startled eyes, the blue leather case crashed to the floor from the jacket's inner pocket. In crashing, somehow it opened, so that pearls and loose velvet bed scattered this way and that. With them there fluttered down a folded sheet of white paper.

"Hullo, what's this? Evidently something Eve's keeping very carefully for once in a way!" Warren was saying as, retrieving the pearls and case, he picked up the paper too, opening it out.

Brand waited in silence, aware that the moment had come. He stood silently, while Warren read the thing and watched his profile for the first visible signs of reaction. When they came, Brand was staggered. Warren was laughing softly.

"Why, it's my last letter to her. She'd just been reading it when I turned up to-day, so she said. Nice, Brand, to know that your wife treasures your letters so much as to keep them with her pearls."

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NEXT WEEK

FIVE years ago there appeared in PASSING SHOW a series of articles on Soviet Russia under the title "Looking-Glass Land," by Lars Moën, globe-trotting Norwegian-American cinema technician and writer, who, after working for several years in British studios, went to Russia "just to have a look round" for three months, and stayed six.

Before the articles were in print he was back in Russia, this time to work there for five more years. The other day he walked in here again, and the natural outcome of our re-union was a suggestion that he should write further articles on Russia, which he knows to-day far more profoundly. He agreed, on one condition.

"I'm tired of books and articles that treat Russians as though they were guinea-pigs in a laboratory, or columns of figures in a table of economic data," he said. "Life in Russia is teeming with humour, excitement, drama and tragedy. If it were half as dull, or as terrifying, as some people try to make out, I should never have remained there as long as I did.

"So let's leave the economics and politics to others, and tell your readers some of the human side of life in Russia; for Russians *are* human beings, you know, however much some people may forget it."

The result is three articles unlike anything else that has appeared on Soviet Russia. The first, appearing next week, is called "Keeping a Roof Over Your Samovar" and tells some of the things that people do in Moscow to get living-rooms; of domestic complications arising out of the housing shortage; of knavery and just plain fun.

"I claim to be an authority on the housing shortage," says Moën, "for I was short of a room oftener than anybody I knew.

"Perhaps you wonder why I stuck it. The real reason is that Russia is the most exciting place in the world in which to work, if you really love your work for its own sake. Among other things, I helped plan several new cinema studios; designed apparatus for 'dubbing' talkies into other languages, and 'dubbed' into Russian such foreign films as *The Invisible Man*, and assisted in making the first Soviet X-ray films with sound, showing the beating of the human heart."

YOU'RE TELLING US!

YOU'RE TELLING US! Half a guinea is paid for each letter or quotation printed on this page. Address: "Readers' Letters," "Passing Show," 93 Long Acre, London, W.C.2. Please state whether Mr., Mrs. or Miss

WE can't help feeling sorry for Mr. R. A. Lewis, of Smethwick, Staffs., for he has suffered a severe blow. In fact, he may never be the same again. A man can't go through life cherishing a belief that the Australian he-man is a "healthy, hearty bloke cheerfully punching his sheep or his cows and licking our Test Team in his spare time," without being hurt when eventually he comes up against the sharp edge of truth.

Disenchantment came to Mr. Lewis in the bar of a "local" when he encountered a visitor from "down under" slowly drinking himself to death, in full view of all that could be seen of the Mother Country from the window of the smoking-room.

"According to my acquaintance, the famous Slav melancholy is sheer *joie de vivre* compared with the particularly deep shades of blue that occasionally enshroud our Australian cousins," says Mr. Lewis. "He told me some grim stories of a spot on the Sydney water-front, which has so often been used as a jumping-off place for eternity that it is now known as 'Suicide's Leap.'

"He told me of a policeman who was just in time to grasp a would-be suicide as he prepared to dive into the harbour.

"'Steady on, cobber!' he said, using the local term for 'buddy,' or 'pal,' or 'mate,' or what you will. 'What do you want to throw yourself in there for?'

"The man laughed bitterly. 'My wife has run away with my best friend,' he said. 'I have lost all my savings in a share swindle; the manager of the firm for which I worked has just fired me and the doctor says I have only twelve months to live. I am broke, starving, ill and lonely; so what have I to live for?'

"'Oh, things can't be so bad as all that,' said the policeman. 'Let's sit

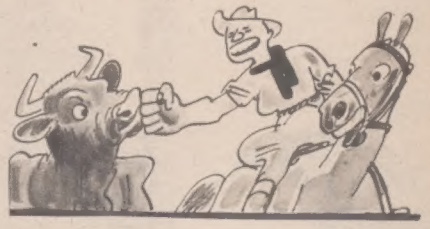
down and talk it over.' So they sat on the harbour wall and talked of the beauty of the moonlight on water; of art and then love; of marriage and even life in general.

"And after an hour and a half of opening the doors of their minds on half-forgotten things they both jumped in the harbour..."

For fear you now think that the damp hand of melancholy has robbed Australia of all its he-men, we quote Mr. Sep Lane, of Mersea Lake, Bridgetown, Western Australia, on the subject of chivalry.

"Even though the latest misdeeds and spiciest divorce cases usually get all the publicity, peace time has great heroes who go unsung," he says, a little sententiously. "Not long ago there stumbled into the police depôt at Rober River, North Australia, an aboriginal medicine man carrying another aboriginal suffering from leprosy in an advanced form.

"The medicine man had carried his unfortunate companion more than three



hundred miles and, because of the patient's inability to stand great discomfort, they had travelled so short a distance each day that the journey had taken nine months.

"Unfortunately, the medicine man had been in contact with his companion for so long that he contracted the disease and had to be confined to the leper colony, which is not the reward he deserved."

And, according to Mrs. R. Hodge, of Sheerness, Kent, there are even heroes in New Zealand where life has more than its proper share of difficult moments. She refers us to Bobby, her fourteen-year-old nephew. "Bobby's father was badly gassed in Flanders in 1917," she says, "and was ordered to live in the country. But he was given no compensation. He returned to New Zealand to marry the Scotch Colonial girl he had left behind him, and settled on the land to fight for a living this time.

"And when their Bobby had reached the age of eleven he was milking sixteen cows twice a day and gaining his 'sixth standard proficiency certificate' through a correspondence course.

"He was milking twenty cows twice a day at fourteen and had matriculated through the post. Then he decided, even though the family coffers were empty, he would like to see the Correspondence School Handiwork Exhibition in Wellington.

"So he set about making money. Between milking times he gathered those vines called 'supplejacks' from the bush and fashioned baskets from them, selling clothes baskets, shopping baskets, and bassinets until he had sufficient money to take him to Wellington.

"Governor Galway, attending the opening of the exhibition, introduced Bobby to the world by way of the microphone and in steady tones the fourteen-year-old set the ether throbbing with the problems of making baskets with vines.

"And in the far north a proud ex-soldier and his lassie switch off their home-assembled radio to go out into the pasture to attend to an extra ten cows each. They had their reward."

Just two other heroes for you to think about while you are waiting for Clark Gable to prance on to the screen in time to save Public Beauty No. 2 from dying an old maid.

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to eat?

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For Your Amusement

CLUES ACROSS

1. Time without end.
7. Make neat.
12. Superficial covering.
13. First of their class.
15. Passed.
16. These are more elevated.
17. To mould afresh.
18. Attribute of Samson.
20. Home for animals.
21. This or the other.
23. Pronoun found in 4 down.
25. A girl and part latitude for weariness.
29. With due sense of propriety.
31. Went over the water.
32. Uncloses.
34. A narrow passage.
35. Dealt turned Greek.
36. Comfort in this.
39. Not like pebbles on the beach.
41. Relating to by-gone day or maybe year.
42. Narrative poems.
43. Dried and withered.
44. Stated.

CLUES DOWN

1. Always or at any time.
2. Instrument of vision.
3. To perform.
4. Something given back.
5. Found in Skegness but not in Clacton.
6. Mountain ridge.
7. These should be established.
8. Check or restrain.
9. Pertaining to Empire.
10. Bearing.
11. Formerly.
14. Unit of work.
18. Abide or perhaps a support.
19. Attention here.
22. Undesirable state.
24. An attempt.
26. Head-dresses.
27. This is in the fore-arm.
28. May be stalked.
29. A pattern.
30. Hinder or retard.
33. Employer.
37. You may take this from a date.
38. Partly 43 across.
40. This is in the appropriate place.

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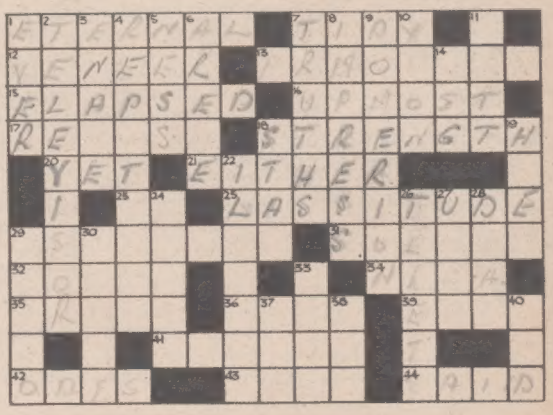
Solution to last week's puzzle



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JACK: Good heavens, man, aren't you ready yet? We are late already for dinner and may miss the speeches.
REG: It's no use. I can't go without a shave. I have not shaved for two days, my skin is too sore, and shaving soap only makes it worse.
JACK: Good lord, you don't use the old brush and soap method! Send out at once for a tube of Shavex, and your skin will feel soothed and you will shave in a couple of minutes. You will feel as fresh as a daisy and your skin will feel like satin and all the soreness will disappear and, my dear boy, it takes away all the wrinkles. Hurry up.

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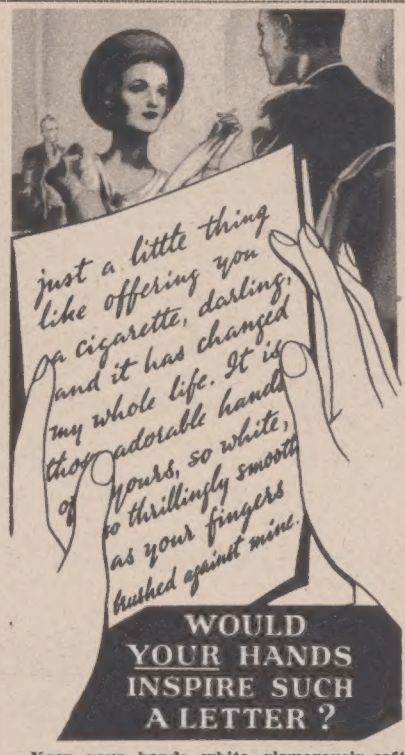

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